

“LES MBENGIS”— MIGRATION, GENDER, and FAMILY

the moral economy of transnational
Cameroonian migrants' remittances



Christina
Atekmangoh

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“Les Mbengis”—Migration, Gender, and Family:

The Moral Economy of
Transnational Cameroonian
Migrants’ Remittances

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Dedication

To my parents Rosemary Manka Che, Lucas Wambong Che, Magdelen Ami, Moses Agejob Ami, and especially to my dearest sister Violet Sirri Che for everything you have sacrificed for me to get to where I am.

And

To all the African migrants who die on their journey in the quest for a better life.

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Summary

My study is about transnational migration and remittance flows to Cameroon. In Francophone Cameroon, transnational migration is described as “aller en aventure à mbeng” while “bushfalling” is the word used in Anglophone Cameroon. The former denotes a person going for an adventure in the global North and the latter is used in a metaphorical sense to refer to someone who goes to the bush (that is the global North) to hunt and bring home food and/or game to feed the family.

According to the Cameroon current dire economic state, people increasingly aspire to go abroad to make a living. Migrants are not doing that on their own but mainly as part of a collective (family) strategy and with the help of brokers. Relations between migrants and the family that stays in Cameroon can be characterized as follows: Families raise and educate their children to become adults. In return to giving children the “gift of life”, families expect reciprocal care, best secured through economic success abroad. As families in Cameroon heavily contribute to the funding of migration trajectories, often by selling properties such as land or houses or borrowing money, they also expect a return on their investments. All that constitutes what I have called the moral economy of transnational remittances. Within this framework, I understand remittances to be a composite of financial, material, and cultural flows—maintaining and transforming social and kinship ties. Following this approach, I argue that *remittances are the family claims for the gift of life*.

In the moral economy of transnational remittances in Cameroon, a good migrant is someone who remits regularly, builds up a house for his parents, and gives them some means to raise their income so they can be more independent economically e.g. buying them a car they can transform into a taxi. Cameroonian migrants abroad further welcome and facilitate the migration of siblings as a way to lighten family obligations. The arrival of the incumbent means that families in Cameroon have more than one person to demand for remittances.

By sending aspiring migrants abroad, migration brokers play a key role in the moral economy of transnational remittances. The younger generation is able to live up to its distributive duties thanks to the intervention of brokers who make access to the global North possible. Migration projects with brokers are discussed in terms of “lines”. These lines are the countries for which brokers have opportunities to send migrants to. 10 years ago, the lines would include countries like United Arab Emirates (UAE) especially to places like Dubai and Qatar, Europe, the US, and Canada. Nowadays, there are more opportunities to send people to Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Europe, the United States, and Canada. Would-be migrants resort to brokers for several kinds of services, from selected travel documents to a full package (including passport, visa, travel ticket as well as other papers like marriage or birth certificates, bank account statements, applications for admission into foreign universities). Brokers are either formal organizations (with offices and some employees) or informal (a single person operating from home). Formal brokers can also be foreign institutions who set up local offices in Cameroon to recruit students into foreign universities. The brokerage network extends beyond Cameroon to some residence countries (like Eastern Europe) where migrants come in contact with brokers who can help them relocate to another country considered as more favourable.

The relationship between brokers and their clients ends once the client finally migrates. Brokers encounter certain challenges e.g. not being able to send a migrant to the country that the migrant desires even when the money for such a project has been paid. In such cases, the broker and the migrant re-negotiate for other options by sending the migrant to another country.

To be sure that migrants respect [distributive] duties coming from the gift of life but also from the expenses incurred to finance their travel, parents resort to different strategies:

- Put pressures on their migrants to marry the right person (that is people who parents know or can control, preferably people from the same ethnic group, and people who are known to them) to be

sure that this person doesn't reap the benefits the family expect from remittances;

- Send gifts such as food and local herbal remedies which serves to remind migrants of the gift of life they have received ;
- Exert moral pressures. Families (in the sense of the “operational family”, that is, the one that subsidizes the migrant) do not use witchcraft pressures to make the migrant remit. Yet a parent who is annoyed over the misconduct of his/her migrant might, however, curse or say bad things against him or her. This also applies to cases where a migrant neglects his family. Nonetheless, the persecutive environment that everyone share as a general culture is a great tool to make one respect his/her distribution duties ;
- Privilege when they can migration of daughters over the migration of sons, because it is said that daughters are more respectful of their distributive duties than sons.

The successful migration of a family member can fundamentally transform the social status of a family in Cameroon. These new inequalities can provoke jealousy and by consequence witchcraft attacks. Families with bush fallers resort to different strategies to deflect jealousy in their direct environment (kin, neighbours): keeping quiet about their luck, redistributing a part of what they got as a way to diffuse wealth and make it harmless. At the same time, bushfallers and families with bushfallers also desire to keep their rank and distinguish themselves from regular non-bushfallers and as such they tend to organise more ostentatious rituals than others e.g. (weddings, birth, and death celebrations).

Family's strategies to control the moral behaviour of their migrants abroad can be led astray by the coping strategies of individual migrants in the face of economic and legal difficulties abroad. While a family in Cameroon might prefer his or her migrant to marry somebody from their own ethnic group, a migrant abroad might have to marry from a different ethnic group or a European, so as to be able to obtain a residence permit. Migrants can also be very eager to fulfil family needs, for instance when they quit school to

better work and remit. Thus it can be concluded that families are both a site of tension and a supportive social network.

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With all this support, I claim responsibility for any errors or mistakes.

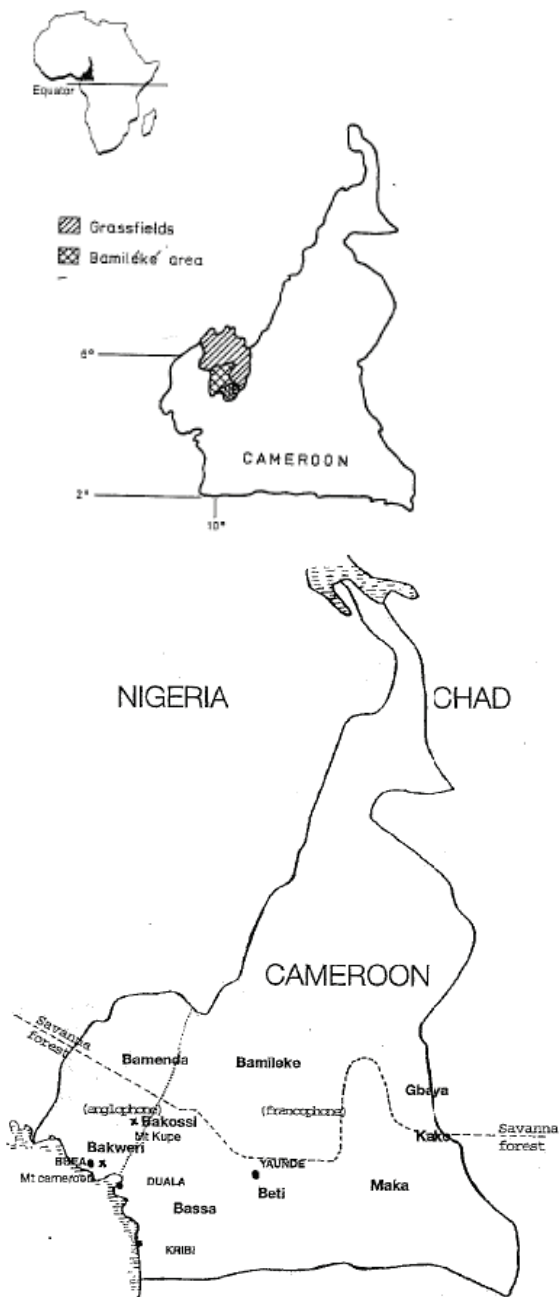
List of acronyms

BEPC:	Brevet d'Etude du Premier Cycle
CamGrass:	Cameroonian Grassfielders association (Sweden)
CDC:	Cameroon Development Corporation
CEMAC:	Communauté Economique Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale
CFA:	Communauté Financière Africaine
COMINADA:	Commissioner of Oaths for Canada
CPDM:	Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement
DAVOC:	Draw a Vision of Cameroon
DV lottery:	Diversity Visa lottery
ENAM:	Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature
GCE:	General Certificate of Education
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GNP:	Gross National Product
GREFCAM Suisse:	Groupe de Réflexion des Femmes Camerounaise
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
IOM:	International Organisation for Migration
NEM:	New Economics theory of Migration
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDF:	Social Democratic Front
Skånecam:	Cameroonians in Skåne (Sweden)
UN:	United Nations
UNDESA:	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
USD:	United States Dollar

Map 1: map of Cameroon showing the ten regions and capital cities



Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/cameroon/cameroon-political-map.html> (accessed 17.10.2016)



Map 2: location of ethnic groups in southern and west Cameroon (adapted from Geschiere 1997b & Feldman-Savelsberg, 1999:44).

Introduction

Mbeng, mbengis, bush and bushfallers

“Some man de wey e no want go bush? Kontri don strong, all man want go...”¹ (male Cameroonian in Cameroon, 36 years old).

« Les mbengis-ci vont nous tuer. Merde ! regarde-moi la voiture ... » [remark made by a young guy while a white high class jeep in Yaoundé was passing by, with a foreign number plate, driven by a guy who might be in his late thirties).

This book is about Cameroonian transnational migration and remittances. Out migration from Cameroon is described in local parlance as “Mbeng”² with subsequent terminologies such as mbengis, bush, and busfallers. Mbeng means to travel abroad to White man Kontri (Pidgin English word for Euro-America). During my childhood, Mbeng referred to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon. When someone travelled to Douala, it was said that s/he had travelled to Mbeng. Douala was, and still is a major destination area for most rural and some urban dwellers from other villages and towns seeking for ‘greener pastures’ due to the availability of work in some of Cameroon’s major industries³. However, the last two decades have witnessed a change of tides from internal migration

¹ English translation from Pidgin English: *Is there anyone who doesn’t want to go abroad? The country has become hard/difficult, everyone wants to go.*

² As I go further in this chapter and throughout this book, I will write Mbeng without quotation marks. I will also use mbeng, mbengis, bush and bushfallers interchangeably because they have the same meanings. The former are mostly used by French speaking Cameroonians while the latter by English speaking Cameroonians.

³ 2015 statistics shows that Douala is the most populated town in Cameroon, because it is the country’s economic capital. It has an estimated population of 1,338,144 inhabitants while that of Yaoundé is 1,299,446 inhabitants (<http://populationsdumonde.com/fiches-pays/cameroun>, accessed 24.03.2016).

within Cameroon to increased international migration from Cameroon.

I first heard about *mbeng*, referring to Paris when I first travelled to Douala in the year 2000 from one of my Francophone friends who was explaining to me that her aunt who lives in Mbeng was coming home that year for Christmas. As times have changed, so too have concepts. Now, the concept of *mbeng* no longer refers just to Douala, or to Paris, but to the West or the global North including the US. One of my informants explains this to me in the following words:

“You know for many urban rich people in Douala and Yaoundé, going to Paris was like someone leaving the village to the city. It was the only place most of us Francophones knew about, or travelled to. But now, Paris is so congested. People are migrating everywhere in many different countries here in Europe and America. So *mbeng* no longer refers only to Paris as it was the case, it also includes many other White man Kontries” (fieldwork notes, August 2013).

Other terms used in Francophone Cameroon to describe international migration are “aller au front”, “aller se battre”, which means to go the front, to go to battle. These terms which are borrowed from military vocabulary refer to the challenges which migrants may encounter and the strong desire to succeed abroad. Other terms are “faire l’aventure”, “être en aventure”⁴, “se débrouiller” meaning to go for an adventure, to manage/struggle (de Lesdain, 1999) in (Pelican, 2013: 246).

A person who lives abroad in the developed countries is called un “*mbengis*”, and les “*mbengis*” in plural. However, to be called a *real* *mbengis*, one must meet up to certain expectations which among other things include: investments in Cameroon, being able to share material and financial resources with families and friends back home. One of my informants explains to me the meaning of a *real* *mbengis* in the following words:

⁴ Bayart, (1999: 35) mentions that the term ‘adventure’ is also used by the famous *sapeurs* of Congo to describe transnational migration to France.

“Last year when I went home, I went to visit a cousin of mine whom I had sent money to start-up a business. She was very happy, the business had grown and she was quite grateful for what I did to her. And I felt so proud to see that she was putting the money I gave her into proper use. She was proudly introducing me to all of her friends and neighbours and explaining to them that “this is my brother who helped me in this business”. Also, a friend of mine was sick and one of my other friends who learnt that I was in Cameroon called to inform me. I went to the hospital to visit him; there and then, I paid all the bills. I also did buy drinks for some other friends too. So when they thanked me, they said, “truly, you are a real Mbengis” (interview with a Cameroonian migrant in Sweden, August 2013).

Those who are not real mbengis are ‘les faux mbengis’ (‘faux’ as in the French word referring to ‘fake’/‘not real’). Mbeng and mbengis have the same meanings as “bush” and “bushfallers” to Anglophone Cameroonians. While the concepts of bush and bushfallers have been used in many scholarly writing on transnational Cameroonian migration, the concepts of mbeng and mbengis have seldom been used in this regard.

Bushfalling refers to people travelling to the land of the whites for several years and return successful, i.e. with enough money to support the family, build a house, and set up a business (Fleischer, 2011: 76). Bushfalling comes from the words “to fall bush” and this means to go to the ‘bush’, to hunt so as to bring home game or food. Meaning that, one goes to the bush to hunt, or cultivate so as to return successfully to feed the family (Jua, 2003: 6, Pelican et al, 2008, Alpes 2011: 12-16).

A bushfaller (or faller in short form) is someone who lives abroad and only comes to visit. S/he is in possession of both material and financial investments back home. While mbeng strictly refers to the global North, the term bushfalling tend to have a broader meaning to include countries in Asia such as China, Thailand, North and South Korea, to name a few. While someone who migrates to other African countries would not be consider a bushfaller, South Africa is consider as bush and a migrant from there is consider as such. Yet for some people, bush is any country out of Cameroon where one

goes to make money. Bush is a place where people go to help develop themselves and their families, it is a place where one goes for a better future (Alpes, 2011: 231-232). It is often said that whether one is travelling for studies or otherwise, as long as the person has gone abroad and can make money to support him/herself and his/her family, that is bushfalling. Some informants in Cameroon, mostly youngsters told me: “Whether one is going to study or going to ‘huzzle’ (as in the English word to hustle), all is considered as bushfalling because you are no longer like an ordinary man who hasn’t travelled, that is, who hasn’t boarded an airplane and flown across the ocean”.

To put things into perspective and based on a general understanding of what people consider as bushfalling, it can be concluded that migration to other African countries (with the exception of South Africa) would be considered as “gardenfalling”⁵ not bushfalling because such migrants didn’t cross the Atlantic Ocean.

Remittances

Cameroon international migrants’ stock increase from 265,344 in 1990 to 228,383 in 2000 and to 291,792 in 2013 and France is known to be the top destination country for Cameroonian migrants. The top five countries for tertiary education for Cameroonian students are France, Germany, Italy, USA, and South Africa. Between the years 2000-2012, officially recorded remittance inflows increase from 30 to 109 million US dollars⁶. Over the years, as is evident in the opening remarks made by the two Cameroonians above, migration has

⁵ Just as bush, garden is used here in a metaphorical sense referring to places that are closer to home— Cameroon. Nonetheless, the word gardenfalling to describe migration within Africa (especially within the CEMAC region which is where some Cameroonians begin their journey) is hitherto used. This was told to me by an informant who used it in a beautiful way to capture the delineation between what is [real] bushfalling and what is not. This distinction resonates with the general understanding of what bushfalling is. For example I was in a taxi and listened to the conversation of two girls. One was enquiring how the elder brother of the other was doing and the latter said: “he has travelled”. Then she probed: “where did he fall bush”? And the respondent said: “no, he hasn’t fallen bush, he went to Malabo” (Malabo is the capital city of Equatorial Guinea).

⁶ Cameroon migration profile, UNICEF 2013 statistics.

become a common path to success for many in Cameroon⁷— “the country is bad so everyone wants to go”, one of them noted. Moreover, when one travels abroad, one has to return successful. The economic success of migrants is visible in the public realm in Cameroon in the form of investments in housing and other businesses. Migrants are also associated with ostentatious behaviour such as driving big cars and the organization of lavish weddings among other things when they come home to visit.

The economic success of a migrant stimulates the migratory desires of those left behind. There is a strong belief in “bushfalling equals success” to the point where anyone who says anything contrary is seen as trying to discourage others from falling bush. Regardless of stories about sunken boat carrying undocumented migrants trying to enter Europe, the perception of mbeng has become mainstreamed in popular discourses as a place where money can easily be gotten just from doing everything and anything. Bushfalling has become part of a normal course of events of young people who just want to support themselves and their families through the flow of remittances.

Remittances have been defined as the transfer of funds of foreign workers to an individual or individuals in his/her home country. A compilation of the various definitions of remittances indicates that:

- Remittances are the sum of money sent especially by mail, in payment for goods and services or as a gift.

⁷ For example the neighbourhood where I grew up in Mile 16—Buea is called Malabo quarter. Malabo Youths was the name of a youth group that was created in the years 1994/5. I was only 10 years old by then and could not be accepted into the group. This group was mainly in charge of bringing the youth together for social activities. By 1999, some of the members of this group started migrating to Malabo and this migration trend increased over the years. Between the years 2006-2009, all the households in this neighbourhood had a sibling or relative in Equatorial Guinea including one of my brothers. Some of those who left later travelled to Gabon, some did travel even further to Europe. Today, in the small town of Mile 16-Bolifamba in Buea, almost every neighbourhood has someone abroad.

- The transfer of money by a worker working abroad to an individual in his or her home country. The term also refers to the amount of money being sent to remove an obligation.
- The sending of money to someone at a distance.
- The money sent home by migrants to relatives and friends.
- The sending of money or its equivalent from one place to another.

Looking at these definitions, the following themes catch my attention: firstly, remittances are *money* sent to relatives and friends back home. Judging from this definition, it is evident that financial flows remain the conventional definition of remittances. Secondly the sending of remittances is done to fulfil an *obligation*. Thirdly, remittances are *gifts*. And finally remittances are *unidirectional*, that is, from migrants to their families.

Levitt, (1998, 2001) challenges this economic definition of remittances. She coined the term social “remittances” which she defines as “the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending countries...” (1998: 927, 2001: 55-60). She noted that such flows are capable of social transformation. Following Levitt’s broader understanding of remittances, for me, remittances are both economic and socio-cultural. The economic impacts of remittances for families and on the economies of the migrants’ countries of origin cannot be understood without first understanding the socio-cultural norms that shaped migrants remitting behaviour. It is in this line of thought that Cohen, (2011) notes that remittances are inherently cultural (meaning that remittances fulfil an obligation and that they are gifts); they link migrants and their families in countries of departure through complex social and cultural ties.

In line with Cohen, my definition of remittances is that they are *gifts* of both financial and material flows which take care of socio-economic needs and are rooted in moral obligations that define social and kinship ties. For me, the social and cultural ties that Cohen, (2011) talks about are embedded in the moral inclinations that define migrants’ remittance behaviour which are based on implicit obligations and expectations. It is this morality of obligation (rooted in cultural norms) that is central to the *persistence* of Cameroonian

migrants' remittance flows even in times of great adversity. Thus, despite the sometimes pressure to remit, there is also a *moral responsibility* to the sending of remittances. It is this understanding of remittance flows as a moral responsibility that prompted me to adopt the concept of moral economy to explore how norms and values underpin the remittance practice. Using the moral economy framework in studying remittances is informative of how families defined 'good' and 'bad' migrants and also how migrants respond to such representation. If as argued by the moral economists that human behaviour is guided by moral concerns, ethics, and values which translates into familial and communal obligations (which are not void of tensions and conflicts), then it makes sense to understand how concerns of morality give credence to divergent claims in relation to remittance flows. This is an important lacuna in the transnational migration and remittance scholarship that this present study seeks to address.

Anthropology and Migrants' Remittances

Greater amounts of research on remittances have been quantitative e.g. (Mazzucato et al 2013, Dustmann and Mestres 2010, Gupta and Hedge 2009, Faini 2006, Adams and Page 2005, Buch and Kuckulenz 2004, Higgins et al 2004, Ratha 2003, El-Sakka and McNabb 1999, Poirine, 1997, Funkhouser 1995). These studies focus on financial flows and address mainly quantifiable questions such as how much is sent, to how many people or countries, what are the contributions of remittances to personal income and Gross National Income. This approach only gives a shallow and general picture of remittances and remitters through statistical modelling. In addition, it overlooks non-quantifiable remittance flows, that is, social remittances. Most of these studies emanate from the economics discipline.

Changes in migration patterns from the last two decades have prompted anthropologists to develop also an interest in migration issues. Anthropologists studying migration are interested in questions about the socio-cultural dynamics that takes place as people move. They are interested in questions such as how does migration affect

cultural change and ethnic identity? In asking these questions, they focused on households and individuals as their unit of analysis. Brettel, (2000: 107) further suggests that when it comes to migration, the socio-cultural variables must be studied in conjunction with economic variables due to the close connection between culture and society. Therefore it can be said that an understanding of how macro and micro forces shaped migrants socio-cultural and economic behaviours within and across nation-states has become central to anthropological migration research.

Unfortunately, anthropological studies on transnational African migration and remittances remain lagging and there is a dearth of research that examine the central role of gender and family dynamics in transnational migration and remittance flows and how these factors influence the moral economy of these flows. In addition, previous studies on transnational migration and remittances for Cameroonian migrants ignored the gender dimensions of such flows. E.g. (Pelican 2013, Pelican et al 2008, Nyamnjoh 2013, 2011, 2005b, Fleischer 2011, 2007, Alpes 2011, 2013a, Teke 2010,).

Although the circumstances that determine migration and remittances are part of a circular relationship of family, migration, kinship patterns and social relations, studies on migration and remittances tend to treat households and families as a homogenous group. Even the New Economics of Migration theorists who understand migration as a family decision do not distinguish between who receives the remittances that are sent and why. Most often, these studies are based on measuring living standards (living standard surveys) in which only households in the countries of departure are interviewed sometimes with no in-depth data on the migrant—the remitter. These studies thus say little about the meaning and impacts of migration and remittances from both the migrants and the migrants' families. Thus to understand the experiences and remittance patterns for Cameroonian migrants and their families, this book centres on two main subject-matters:

1. the study of the families' economic dynamics that lead to the decision to migrate and the ways people prepare and accomplish their migration projects,

2. the sending, receiving , uses of remittances , as well as the interactions between the families and the migrants on what constitute a good way to be useful to the families, according to gender.

The first theme examines the contextual features of Cameroonian transnational migration; that is, it examines the political, socio-economic, and cultural factors which influence migration. Migrants' migratory trajectories and remitting behaviours are shaped by these contextual factors— financial crises, high unemployment, low salaries are some of the factors influencing Cameroonian migration. In addition, social norms surrounding family obligations and media imagery of the Whiteman Kontri (developed countries) are also contributing factors spearheading migration from Cameroon. Therefore this theme focuses on investigating how these socio-cultural and economic factors affect decisions to migrate and the stakeholders involved—mainly families and migration brokers.

The second theme seeks to understand the circumstances under which remittances flow takes place, that is, the sending, receiving, and uses of remittances. Here, I take as a point of departure the fact that decisions to remit, deciding who receives what is sent, and the uses of remittances involves satisfying economic needs that are embedded with moral familial constraints. While it is true that the sending of remittances is guided primarily by economic rationale, the *persistence* of these flows even when some migrants are facing economic constraints shed light on the fact that understanding remittance flows also involve paying attention to the cultural repertoire that guide migrants' behaviour as individuals within kinship groups and networks of social relations.

Migrants' decision to remit, the frequency of remittances, the amount sent, when, and for what purpose are based on the *quality* of relationship between these migrants and their families. By *quality* of relationship, I mean a combination of the economic, socio-cultural, that is the moral norms that shaped male and female behaviour pattern within and across transnational social spaces. This multi-dimensional analysis broadens our understanding of the complex and

dynamic processes of transnational migration and remittances. This book addresses two main research questions:

Why and how do Cameroonians migrate? How is the sending of remittances guided by a moral economy of the cultural dispositions that define familial/kinship and social relations in Cameroon?

Structure of the Book

In a nutshell, this study is based on the family-migration-remittances paradigm. It examines how family and social networks shape Cameroonian migration and remittances. My research emphasizes the extent to which a quest for family wellbeing, and a search for a better life instigate decision to migrate, the realization of migration projects, and the benefits (or lack of benefits) of migration both to the migrant and his/her family. This study also explores how obligations for remittances maintain kinship ties. To achieve this, I have examined the key aspects that shape Cameroonian migration and remittances which are gender, why and how Cameroonians migrate, decisions to migrate, financing migration projects, information flows, migration brokerage, and family relations with regards to remittance flows.

In writing this book, I have focused more (as in the words of Geertz, 1973: vii, ix) on empirical studies/analyses rather than theoretical disquisitions for the former connects me more to the practicalities of my informants live experiences. Given that my interactions with study participants were in French, English, and Pidgin English, these languages all appear in this study. When I quote Pidgin English statements, I did give an English translation. In the case of French, I do not provide any translation when I was quoting an academic text as doing so might distort the original meaning of the author. To protect my informant's identity, all names have been changed. Life-course events descriptions have also been modified. However, these modifications do not in any way affect the content of the information and descriptions.

The book summary provides the trend of thought in the various chapters and I have used this introductory chapter to: briefly explain some key terms used locally in describing transnational migration, state my research questions, and provide my own understanding of remittances which includes aspects of morality beyond its economic motive and effect.

Chapter 2 is the literature review and theoretical framework where I present the state-of-the-art in matters of migration studies. I began by providing a general overview of the research so far within this field. In relation to remittances, I examined two perspectives: the migration-remittances-development perspective which has received much scholarly attention and the moral economy perspective which has been rarely studied. The last section of this chapter focuses on some migration theories. Here, I focused on the New Economics Theory of Migration (NEM), the network theory, transnationalism theory, and the feminist theory of intersectionality which is slowly entering into migration studies.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter where I described the research design, the methods used to generate my data, the various research sites, the number of informants and how I got to meet my informants. In this chapter, I presented the 5 main informants of my research. Yet, my data is not based only on these 5 informants but also drawn from other case studies which I have used to illustrate the different thematic areas covered.

Chapter 4 provides some background information, mainly the socio-cultural, geographical, and political features of Cameroon and Cameroonian migration. Here, I provided a summary of early internal migration in Cameroon following the creation of colonial plantations in the coasts which attracted many young men. I also did examine how this male only migration changed to include the migration of women. This chapter contextualises internal migration flows in Cameroon and how such internal movements later gave way to transnational migration.

Chapter 5 examines the social and economic aspects of Cameroonian migration. The social aspects examine the prestige and status that is associated to bushfalling and bushfallers. The economic aspects analyse the everyday discontent provoked by socio-economic

and political ills such as corruption and impoverishment, a situation which pushes bushfelling as a major path to success. These same popular discontents are the reasons Cameroonians give when they complain that Cameroon is bad/has become difficult— “kontri don spoil”. I also probed into the practice of homosexuality as one of the non-economic factors that is instigating out migration from Cameroon. So far, research on what Eboko and Awondo (2013) described as “homo-mobilités” has shown that this form of migration is mostly used by men. Cameroonian women on their part are more engaged in “cybermigration” and trying to marry a white man (Nitchou, 1999, Johnson-Hanks, (2007).

Chapter 6 looks at agents of migration, notably migration brokers and the family. It explains the role of family in a migration project which includes taking decisions regarding who should migrate, raising money to finance the project; – hence expecting returns from migration. I also did examine the roles of migration brokers as key actors that transform an aspiring migrant into a migrant. In a sense, this chapter examines various forms of migration brokerage.

Chapter 7 examines marriage, birth, and death ceremonies in relation to Cameroonian migration and remittances. Here, I illustrate how migration is influencing and influences the *values*⁸ of individual, familial, and communal actions and interactions. Other issues examined in this chapter include how a bushfeller status affect marriage negotiations in relation to traditional weddings and the social recognition for bushfeller weddings, birth celebrations (“born-house”), and death celebrations (“cry-die”).

Chapter 8 focuses on the difficulties of life abroad and the moral economy of remittances by examining the relationship between migrants and their families in Cameroon in terms of remittances flow. Here, I showed how families have been raising and educating their children until they become adults and as a consequence, they expect reciprocity from them, and that they will take care of their parents when they meet economic success abroad. Yet the relationship

⁸The term value is used here in a sociological sense referring to group conceptions of the relative desirability of things. Values are the opinions, convictions or beliefs that guide human actions within a society (Adler 1956, Parsons 1966). See also Habermas (1984).

between migrants and their families is not void of tensions and conflicts. Nonetheless despite any conflict or disagreement between migrants and their families, migrants always strive to maintain ties even across great geographical distances. I also illustrate how migrants become powerful within their families when they meet success abroad. S/he gets the status of an elder. The chapter documents the strategies adopted by parents to make sure migrants respect their duties. I also did examine what it means to be called a successful migrant as well as what I described as the social capital of migration.

Chapter 9 explores witchcraft pressures in relation to remittance giving and distribution or non-distribution. As a discourse focused on evil, witchcraft is used here to understand how migrants explain any misfortune that they might be confronted with. This chapter also examined how witchcraft can be used as a sanction for those migrants who fail to remit (those who migrate and tend to forget their families) as well as for families with migrants who do not [re]-distribute the remittances they receive from their bushfeller children within the extended family. Nonetheless, migrants cannot remit indefinitely to everybody. Thus these stories of witchcraft show that people are always trying to find some kind of balance between their private interest for accumulation and their public obligation to redistribute (if they redistribute too much there is no room for projects –building up a house, sending a car, accommodating a sibling-, if they don't redistribute enough misfortunes can happen). Thus what they need to do is “to learn to live with their sorcerer” (de Rosny, quoted in Geschiere 1997b). Consequently some migrants seek diviners for protection while others convert to Pentecostalism.

Chapter 10 is the conclusion where I stress the significance of my research within the field of migration and remittance studies. It brings out what is new and important about my research (the gender, familial, and moral economy understanding of remittances). To do this, I integrated and did synthesise the various issues examined in previous chapters.

Migration and remittances: An overview

This chapter is divided into three parts, providing an overview of the literature on migration and remittances. Part 1 is the state-of-the-art of the literature on migration. It presents the debates within the field of transnational migration, touching on aspects related to the increase securisation of borders in many migrant receiving states. Part 2 focuses on the literature on remittances. Here, I examine how the study of remittances have been situated within the literature including the limitations of the models used in this approach, focusing specifically on the weaknesses of previous economic models that explain remittance motivations. Following these limitations, I situate the study of remittances within a moral economy approach. Part 3 discusses some of the main theories that have been advanced in explaining transnational migration and remittances.

“Ouvrez les frontières”: State-of-the art in migration studies

***Ouvrez les Frontières** by Tiken Jab Fakoely*

Du Cap à Gibraltar, nous sommes des milliers à vouloir comme vous, venir sans rendez-vous

Nous voulons voyager et aussi travailler, mais nous, on vous a pas refusé le visa.

Ouvrez les frontières, ouvrez les frontières...

On veut que nos familles ne manquent plus de rien, On veut avoir cette vie où l'on mange à sa faim. On veut quitter cette misère quotidienne pour de bon

On veut partir d'ici car nous sommes tous en train de péter les plombs ! Ouvrez les frontières, laissez nous passer... Y'a plus une goutte d'eau, pour remplir notre seau

Ni même une goutte de pluie, tout au fond du puits. Quand le ventre est vide, sur le chemin de l'école, un beau jour il décide, de prendre son envol...

On est plein à vouloir du rêve occidental, ouvrez la porte ici, la jeunesse s'essouffle... Vous avez pris nos plages, et leur sable doré, mis l'animal en cage, abattu nos forêts

*Qu'est-ce qu'il nous reste, quand on a les mains vides, on se prépare au voyage .Et on se jette dans le vide. Ouvrez les frontières, laissez-nous ... passer...*⁹

As Tiken Jah Fakoly, the Ivorian artist, sings, contemporary debates within the field of transnational migration studies are fused with notions of what de Genova et al, (2014) described as border spectacles¹⁰. The artist sings that when people are hungry, one day they would be forced to leave. These migrants are leaving to ameliorate their lives and that of their families. Hatton and Williamson, (2003) study confirms that demographic and economic pressures are central to African transnational migration. Yet the ability to achieve this goal of migration is often restricted by border securisation.

Transnational human mobility is not new, but its nature, volume, direction and causes are continually being transformed. More than one type of migration may be said to occur at any given time in situations where people move from rural to urban centres or cross national borders to other countries. Such movements can either be voluntary or involuntary as with the case of refugees in a new location. Migrations have occurred throughout human history and have been influenced by different socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental factors such as the pursuit of freedom of speech and sexuality, escape from poverty and unemployment, wars and natural disasters. Political and economic changes in the 20th century, made possible through improved information and communication technology and well developed means of transportation have facilitated an increase in global migration flows.

⁹ Tiken Jah Fakoly, ouvrez les frontières. Available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beXczA-z6uM> (accessed 28.07.2015)

¹⁰ “The border spectacle is the enactment of exclusion through enforcement of border which produces (illegalised) migration as a category and literally and figuratively renders it visible. A representation of illegality is imprinted on selected migration streams and bodies, while other streams and bodies are marked as legal, professional, student, allowable... In this regime of governmentality, the border spectacle constitutes a performance where illegalization functions along with other devices (waiting, denial, missing paperwork, interview, etc.) to govern and manage migration, to operationalise policies of differential inclusion...” (de Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles, 2014: 13).

Data from UNDESA, (2013: 1) shows that the number of international migrants worldwide reached 232 million, up from 175 million in the year 2000. Between the years 1990-2000, the international migrant stock grew by an average of 1.2 percent per year. During the period 2000-2010, the annual growth rate accelerated to 2.3 percent.

It has been argued that the increasing trend in migration flows is caused by poverty due to lack of employment opportunities especially among the youth and a consequent feeling of dismal economic prospects (Zoomers et al, 2008: 4-6). Similarly, Kapur and McHalle, (2006) maintain that poverty in developing countries is due to state neglect in putting in place supporting institutions. To them, migration could be an escape route from poverty wherein migrants are obliged to move to countries with supporting state institutions geared towards a better life— “if you cannot bring good institutions to the poor, allow the poor to move to good institutions” (2006.138, 141).

In the sense of Kapur and McHalle’s, all migrants are poor, or at least poverty is pivotal to decisions to migrate. This line of argument resonates with the *push* and *pull* school of thought that considers poverty (caused by low incomes) to be the main *push* factor for transnational migration. Such increasing flows of human mobility from the so called global South to the global North have resulted in migration becoming even more regulated and scrutinised prompting transnational migrants to devise alternative strategies and routes.

Turning on the Television on Saturday October 5th 2013, one of the topics in the headlines on Al Jazeera reads: “Lampedusa: a wake-up call for the EU? Will the latest migratory tragedy off the Italian coast trigger any change in the EU’s migration and refugee policies”? In this news cast, a boat carrying about 500 African migrants sank off the Italian coast of Lampedusa on October 3rd; at least 127 migrants died, around 150 were rescued (see photo 5 in appendix 12). Also, in the English edition of the newspaper Le Monde Diplomatique published on October 10 2013, the headline reads: Mapping Europe’s War on Immigration; and the opening paragraph reads: “Europe has built a fortress to be protected from ‘illegal’ immigration from the South, from peoples fleeing civil war, conflict

and devastating poverty”. IOM reports confirm that between January to June 2015, an estimated 1865 migrants have lost their lives in trying to enter Europe via the Mediterranean. There are also many deaths en route to Libya via the deserts¹¹. Such cross border disasters are not new. In fact, over the past decades, from around the 90s, many African migrants have died en route to Europe. Some of these migrants are migrating in search for better economic opportunities, while others may be fleeing from war.

Transnational migration over the years have diversified and intensified. At the same time, the policies of many migrant receiving countries have become subject of debates and intense politicisation between left and right wing politicians. In a sense, the 21st century has been described by Brettell and Hollifield, (2000: 139) as an era of migration crises which has resulted in an intense “securisation” of migration (Castles, 2007: 34). Transnational flows have not only become securised, but have also become very bureaucratic, involving high costs and lengthy visa processing times as Bayart, (2007: 239) noted:

“One need only consider the time required to obtain visas, their price and the rigidity of the procedures involved... and that are starkly inequalitarian for those from the South—to grasp the extent to which the “neo-liberal” globalisation period displays neither the flexibility nor the free movement vaunted by its acolytes”.

It is such bureaucratic complexities that prompted Castles and Miller, (2009) to conclude that we live in an age of migration which has resulted to increase debates and strategies on how to *regularize* migration.

Nation-states have fortified their frontiers, erect barriers, build even higher walls. Policing of borders has become pervasive, visa application procedures have become more complex and immigration laws made tighter. Such strategies have become efficient tools for criminalising migration and creating new binaries—aliens vs. citizens, legal vs. illegal migrant. As a matter of fact, transnational migration

¹¹ IOM reports, 2015. <http://www.iom.int/news/iom-cites-discovery-more-victims-sahara-among-migrants-bound-libya> (accessed 17.06.2015)

according to Gasper and Truong, (2010: 340-342) is about abilities, possessed only by those who have the capability to cross border. Immigration is treated as requiring special permission. At the same time, migrants receiving states are caught-up in the juxtaposition between the demand for cheap immigrant labour and xenophobic sentiments. The normative juridico-political consideration that is embodied in the definition of legal/illegal migrant are “constituted and regimented by the law— directly, explicitly, in a manner that presumes to be more or less definitive” (De Genova, 2002: 421). “Therefore states actions to defined its territoriality through deportation is no fortuity, but rather showcase the various ways through which states *intensify* (italics in original) the constitutive separation of the “aliens” on the far side of the frontier from the “natives”” (De Genova, 2010: 53-54).

In line with De Genova, (2002, 2010) Khosravi, (2011: 118) further elaborates on states construction of migrants’ boundaries in which the ‘illegal’ immigrant constructed as anti-citizen distort the ‘purity’ of the welfare state and constitute a ‘danger’. Consequently, immigrants are placed under surveillance, locked up and deported. On the one hand, the ‘illegal’ immigrants described as “les sans papiers” (Bredeloup, 2010: 459) are the unwanted strangers. On the other hand, the ‘good migrants’ are either those who have returned to their country of origin or those who are fully integrated into the host society conforming to what was expected of them and accepting that their stay is dependent on the low-skilled work they have been offered.

Geschiere and Meyer (1998), Geschiere, (2009, 2011) studies have shown that globalisation brings a more nuanced meaning in relation to immigration. That is to say, globalisation does not imply the disappearance of boundaries; rather, it is a situation of ‘global flows’ and ‘cultural closure’. They argue that in this process of ‘cultural closure’, notions of ‘identity’ appear to play a central role (pg. 602-604). In addition, De Genova, (2002, 2010) and Khosravi, (2011) and other authors (Agamben, 1998, Coutin, 2003, 2010, Peutz, 2010) studies demonstrate how nation states policies have criminalised (im)migration. These authors maintain that the legal and physical borders which have accompanied contemporary

transnational migration have created a new category of potential criminal: “the” migrant”. However, in this study, I do not intend to elaborate on the criminalisation of migration, nor on states construction of migrants into ‘illegal’ versus legal. Nonetheless, it is evident that these migrants’ legal statuses categorised as documented and undocumented within a nation-state affect their remittance patterns¹².

What is also evident in the migration literature is the increase migration of women. Statistics from UNDESA, (2013: 3) shows that women comprise 48 percent of international migrants stock worldwide. The flow of female migrants in developed countries is higher than female South-South migration. In the former, women constitute 52 percent of all migrants and 43 percent in the latter in 2013.

Morokvasic, (1983b, 1984) was one of the earliest authors writing on the gender dimensions of transnational migration. She asserts that economic hardship coupled with changing notions of femininity and masculinity have resulted to increase migration of women. Within such circumstances, women are not only migrating as dependent wives of male migrants; rather, they are migrating independently. Over time, especially within the last three decades many feminist scholars have expanded on Morokvasic’s thesis on gender and migration e.g. Pedraza 1991, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999, 2000, Mahler and Pessar 2006, Piper 2008, Kofman and Raghuram 2009, Parrenas 2009. The increasing migration of women has prompted some researchers to describe it as the feminisation of migration (Piper 2008, Oishi 2005, Pessar 2005).

Over the years, gender analysis in the study of migration have cut across the social science disciplines; studying migration at both local (national) and transnational (global) levels. This local-global interconnectedness is the driving force behind Mahler and Pessar, (2001) “gendered geographies of power” and Pessar and Mahler, (2003) call for “bringing in” gender into migration studies. Mahler and Pessar (2001) thesis on gendered geographies of power is based

¹² Sorensen, (2005a, b, 2006) and Boussichas, (2009) studies show that legality affects remittances in that documented migrants are more likely to remit bigger amounts than undocumented migrants.

on the assertion that when men and women migrate transnationally, socio-economic and cultural factors tend to affect their gendered behaviour, [re]defining gender power relations in their new location.

Similarly, Salih, (2003: 27) asserts that global economic restructuring and nation-states policies are primarily shaping the direction of transnational social fields¹³. Nonetheless, the conditions for moving transnationally are not always available to women or are limited and framed within a set of normative and cultural gendered rules. Such normative and cultural regulations are based upon hegemonic interpretation of gender roles which conditioned migrants' women's identities and their abilities for engagement in transnational activities. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2011) summarises the gender and migration scholarship which according to her, resonates on the following main themes: the experience of women crossing borders, migration and the transnational provision of care (also known as the global care chain), migration and sexuality (which investigate how compulsory heterosexuality pressure gays and lesbians to migrate), and studies on sex trafficking.

It has also been documented that migrant women tend to remit more than men. This is rooted in societal norms of femininity in which women are supposed to, or consider to have more feelings towards their families and to behave as such¹⁴. Chant and Radcliffe, (1992) maintains that women tend to have stronger networks with their families in both the countries of origin and destination and this habit is associated with greater remittance behaviour. Likewise gender norms through socialisation denote that women attach more importance to the family. In other words, women face greater obligations to fulfil kinship obligations related to care. It is in this line of thought that Sorensen, (2005a: 3) asserts that despite the lower income of female migrants as compared to male migrants, they tend to remit more than men and invest more in child care responsibilities (Ramirez et al, 2005: 31-32, Parrenas 2005). Kofman and Raghuram,

¹³ Transnational social fields are the various ways through which migrants simultaneously partake in homeland activities as well as activities in countries of destination (Levitt and Schiller et al, 2004).

¹⁴Butler, (2004: 42) described this as the production and normalisation of gender duties.

(2009) confirm that this habit of remitting back home for child care responsibilities is a common phenomenon in transnational female migration.

Beside the feminisation of migration, it has also been documented that migration can be a rite of passage for both men and women. For young men in particular, Monsutti, (2007: 169) study shows that migration can be a way for them to prove their masculinity. Using the case of Afghan young men, he maintains that to these young men, migration is a rite of passage to adulthood and a step toward manhood.

In sum, I would say that sustained relations of exchange between individuals and groups within and across borders affect the way male and female migrants (re)construct and respond to their gender identities and expected behaviour. As a matter of fact, the ways in which people *do* gender relate to the interstices of the socio-economic conditions in the communities which they live. Gendered behaviours are continually renewed, recreated, and modified within transnational social fields. In some cases, such behaviours are limited, altered, or become challenged by socio-economic and political events taking place over time. Therefore mainstreaming gender in transnational migration and remittance scholarship becomes even more imperative as it provides for a broader understanding of the multiple ways through which transmigrants men and women adopt transnational practices in multi-layered, multi-transnational communities.

Remittances: the developmentalist view

There is a general acknowledgement of the key role remittances can play for poverty alleviation and survival of households and families in poor countries (de Haas, 2005, Sorensen 2005a, b). Sorensen notes that migration transforms both the life of the individual migrants and the families left behind. In fact the World Bank, (2012 report) confirms that recorded financial remittance flows to developing countries were estimated at 372 billion US dollars in 2011, an increase of 12 percent over the previous year. This same report mentions that remittance flows to developing countries are three times the size of these countries' Official Development

Assistance (ODA). The World Bank recent statistics shows that recorded remittances flow to developing countries in 2013 stood at 404 billion US dollars, an increase of about 3.3 percent over the previous year. In 2014, the flows increased to 436 billion¹⁵. For Kapur, (2004: 6-7) remittances have emerged as a critical insurance mechanism for residents of countries afflicted by economic and political crises, natural disasters, or in cases where “states have failed”. In this sense, remittances has become what Kapur, (2004) called the new “development mantra”.

Ratha and Mohapatra, (2007: 2) and Oucho, (2008: 63, 67) add that by compensating for foreign exchange losses orchestrated by macro-economic crises, remittances contribute widely to the economies of developing countries. It has become the largest source of external financing for poor countries. Also, de Haas and Vezzoli, (2010) maintain that remittances have the potential of removing development obstacles. Through investment in various socio-economic activities such as education, agriculture, and business, remittances have spurred development in migrant sending countries and non-migrants also indirectly benefit. These authors further assert that, the inflow of remittances substantially contributes to income growth in these regions (pg. 23, 25). At the micro level, remittances allow poor recipient households to increase their savings, improve children’s health and educational outcome and improve overall family wellbeing through the provision of other familial basic needs (Fajnzylber and Lopez, 2008: 2). Also, Cotula and Toulmin, (2004: 1) in their study on land access in West Africa assert that remittances are an important resource to land acquisition. Through remittances, migrants are able to acquire land and invest in agriculture. Be it internal or international flows, these authors maintain that remittances are often the main component of household incomes.

Nonetheless, de Haas, (2007c: 15) draws attention to the fact that, land acquisition and agricultural investments can only be done when migrants are quite settled in their countries of destination, and

¹⁵ World Bank, migration and remittances brief (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20648762~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html>), accessed 23.06.2015

all other household/family immediate needs catered for— health, education, food, clothing, repayment of debts back home. He adds that, even when immediate needs have been taken care of, the motivation to invest depends on the investment conditions of the country. de Haas and Vezzoli, (2010) caution that although migration is an intrinsic part of the broader development process, this can only be possible through political and economic reforms which are very imperative as a catalyst to unleash the development potential of migration and remittances.

Despite the benefits of emigration via migrants' investments in countries of origin, it is argued that emigration, especially of skilled professionals leads to brain drain. Yet Oucho, (2008: 51, 63-67) asserts that brain drain could be compensated with brain gain through voluntary return of professionals trained abroad. However, Adepoju, (2008) cautions that such voluntary return is only possible if there are opportunities to attract these foreign trained professional migrants. In the case of Africa, the periods following independence were the heydays when Africans were returning to take over vacant positions left by the colonialists. But when opportunities are lacking, fuelled by political instability and/or economic downturns, returned migration is uncertain.

Regardless of the euphoria of the development potential of remittances, remittances have some negative effects e.g. the “boomerang effect”. This occurs when remittances induce an increase of imports and trade balance deficits in the remittance receiving country. Another negative effect can be produced when remittances generate real exchange rate and decrease the external trade competitiveness. This procedure tends to weaken the economy of the remittance receiving country. In remittance scholarship, this has been described as the “Dutch disease”¹⁶ (Straubhaar and Vadean

¹⁶ Dutch disease happens when foreign currency inflows into a country is converted and used for the purchase of non-tradeable goods such as household items. Foreign currency change into local currency pushes domestic prices. A unit of foreign currency now buys fewer goods and services in the domestic economy than it did before. For an elaborate analysis and example of how the Dutch disease affects an economy, see *The Economist*, November 2015 (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-2>) accessed 15.09.2016.

2005, Acosta et al 2007, Ratha and Mohapatra 2007, Lopez et al 2007, Chowdhury and Rabbi 2014).

It is based on these remittance setbacks that some scholars have become critical of the developmental potential of remittances for migrant sending countries. Kunz, (2008: 1404-1406) for example asserts that instead of generalising the developmental impact of remittances which often fall short in adequately exploring the potential of remittances for poverty alleviation in migrants' households, we need to move to more contextual impacts of remittances. For her, such generalisations do not inform us of what goes on within households as far as the impact of remittances are concerned. She suggests that, investigations on the developmental impacts of remittances should not only be primarily focused on why and how migrants remit but also why migrants behave in certain ways in certain contexts. For instance to understand why and how a migrant will continue to remit even when s/he is facing economic constraints.

The developmental impact of remittances can be contentious when applied to a broader perspective. For instance, to Sen, (1999: 87) development is the removal of all the various forms of unfreedoms—social, economic, environmental, as well as gender inequality. He argues that poverty must be seen as a deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as shortage of income. According to this line of thought, de Haas, (2007c) follows Sen (1999) approach to development and asserts that we need to look beyond income indicators and study the multifaceted ways in which migration and remittances affect the wellbeing and capabilities of people in migrants sending countries. Bearing these in mind, I would say that the thought of remittances as a development tool and the claims of diasporas as contributors to development at 'home' need to be thought through more clearly and contextually because the impacts of international migrants' remittances on development differs across countries and communities.

Remittance determinants and motives

The level of migrants' remittance flows depend on both the migrants' income and their motivation to remit. The willingness to remit is often influenced by certain socio-economic factors. In migration scholarship, these are called "remittance determinants". These determinants include: duration of migration, (that is, how long the migrants have stayed, or how long they intend to stay abroad—temporarily or permanently?)¹⁷, the family status of the migrant (single, married, with or without children?), legal status of migrant and job availability, living expenses in the country of destination, the relations to dependents back home, wage rate, economic activities in host and home countries, the gender composition of migrants' households in home and host countries, household income level, employment status and occupational level of household members in host and home countries. These factors have been classified as the microeconomic determinants. The macroeconomic determinants include: exchange rates, relative interest rates between host and home countries, political risk factors, and facilities for transferring funds (Russell 1986, Taylor 1999, Sorensen 2004a, b, Straubhaar and Vadean, 2005, Adams Jr, 2009). Kabki et al, (2004: 90) note that beside these micro and macroeconomic determinants, the sending of remittances also depend on "the quality of relationship" between the migrant and his/her family as well as non-family members (friends and neighbours) in the region of origin.

Amongst these determinants, it has been argued that legality has a role to play when it comes to migration and remittance flows (Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark, 2002, Boussichas, 2009: 1-2). The ability to get a good or not so good job is dependent on a migrant's legal status. Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark, (2002: 601) and Sorensen, (2005a,

¹⁷ For example, Glytsos (1988, and 1997) notes that the intention to return home inspires the migrant to remit and this differs for those with no return intention. He describes this as "return illusion" against "permanent settlement syndrome". For him, migrants with return illusion have a greater propensity to remit compared to those with permanent syndrome. Lucas, (2005: 139-140) also asserts that remittances rise, and then decline the longer the duration of stay of the migrant. That is to say the more the migrant stays abroad, the less his/her remittance flows.

b, 2006) confirm that legal status affects the kind of jobs un/documented migrants get, the amount of wages earned, and the amount they can remit. Because they receive lower wages compared to documented migrants, their economic contribution to their countries of origin tend to be lower.

In addition to these determinants, two major factors have been identified as the motives for remittances. These are altruism and self-interest. The former is based on the proposition that the migrant's major concern for remittances is the welfare of the family while the latter argues that remittances flow is determined by pure self-interest (Adams 1991, Hoddinott 1994, Lowell and de la Garzia 2000, Straubhaar and Vadean 2005, Rapoport and Docquier 2005, Melkonyan and Grigorian 2012).

Identifying some gaps in the existing literature

Looking at the literature on international migrants remittances, there are still some pertinent issues which need to be examined. First, the gender aspect is still very much lacking in the remittances scholarship. Gender issues in contemporary transnational remittances flow have not been given that much attention. According to Tama and Vause, (2011: 5-6) a gender analysis in African transnational migration is still far lagging behind compared to other regions of migration e.g. the Mexico-US migration. Kunz, (2008) makes an attempt but her study is centred on exploring the gender implications in what she described as the Global Remittance Trend (GRT) and does not directly concern individual migrants and their families in the countries of departure.

Secondly, studies on remittances from a socio-anthropological approach are still lacking compared to economic approaches. The former will provide a better understanding of the socio-cultural perceptions and beliefs that influence migrants' remitting behaviour. The conventional "determinants" and "motivations" models that shape remittance studies within the social science disciplines such as demography, economics, are limited in terms of capturing the nuances in international migrants' transfers and flow of communication between migrants and their families. These models

mostly, if not always, assume a one way flow of transfer from the migrants to family and friends.

Also, remittances are seen only in terms of financial flows ignoring other forms of flow—what Levitt, (1998, 2001) describes as social remittances. Moreover, studies on international migrants' remittances have followed a conventional econometric one way flow. This line of thought overlooks the non-quantifiable *gift-remitting*¹⁸ (what Mazzucato, 2010 call reverse remittances) flowing from families to migrants.

Pessar, (2005: 2) has pointed out a major short coming in the literature of migrants' remittances in general and in particular on the scholarship on gender issues in transnational remittance flows. She maintains that in the beginning of the 70s (and even till today, although to a lesser extent), some studies incorporated “gender” by inserting the variable “sex” into their quantitative data collection and this to me is faulty because sex is not the same as gender. At this juncture, a distinction between sex and gender warrants some attention. Sex is the natural biological difference between male and female while gender is the socially ascribed roles and expected behaviour of the male and female sex. Being a social construct, gender is not fixed but changes over space, place and time. Thus, according to Butler, (1990) people ‘do’ and ‘perform’ gender according to the different socio-cultural contexts in which they are located. That is to say that the “... criteria that make up the male and female categories vary in different cultures...” (Oyewumi, 2005: 10-11).

Therefore if sex is to nature as gender is to culture, then it is important that we understand how gender affects migration and vice versa. However, my aim here is not to go in-depth into the nature-

¹⁸ This concept of ‘gift-remitting’ is inspired by Cliggett, (2003, 2005). She used the concepts gift remitting to describe the gifts flowing from Zambian migrants to their families in the home villages. Unlike Cliggett, for me ‘gift-remitting’ are the gifts of food, clothes, and remedies flowing from families to migrants which is a reminder to migrants of the gift of life they have benefitted. I do not consider these flows as remittances in the same way as Mazzucato, (2010). Rather I describe them as ‘gift-remitting’ which shows how families are remitting the ingredients/elements that ensure the nurturing of the migrant, to prolong his/her gift of life hence prolonging his/her symbolic indebtedness towards his/her family.

culture feminist debate, but rather to understand how normative cultural regulations which are based on hegemonic sexual asymmetries influence migration and migrants' remittance behaviour¹⁹. For instance my research shows that married women are expected to remit more to their agnates because by being married, it is expected that their husbands are taking care of them financially as it is the norm that governs marital unions in Cameroon. These married women are also expected to remit to their in-laws otherwise they will be branded as wicked wives. Thus gender for me as used in this study embodies both the biological difference of male and female sex and the associated socio-cultural gendered roles behaviour that shape migration and remittances. This line of thought resonates with Donato et al, (2006: 6) thesis that migrants become aware of their gender as they attempt to fulfilled expectations of gendered behaviour in the different places they live.

It is also important to point out that studying transnational migration and remittances from a gender perspective does not only mean the collection of information on male and female migrants, (although one would not deny the fact that this is a useful way to grasp the distinctive migratory trajectory and remittance behaviour of these migrants). A gender perspective entails in-depth investigation of the phenomenon under study. This means to go beyond the 'add-women-and-stir' research agenda that have preoccupied gender and migration scholarship and to ask ourselves some key questions that make more visible the gender dynamics. As mentioned in the introduction, these gender concerns are one of the main subject-matter in this research. By addressing these gender concerns, we shall become more aware of the gendered nature of migration, and become more knowledgeable on the various ways through which gendered behaviours are adopted, modified, or altered across transnational social fields.

¹⁹ For example migration scholars have begun paying attention on how gendered sexualities affect migration, that is, how being a lesbian, gay, transgender, or bisexual can affect transnational migration and remittances. In doing so, some authors have used the intersectional approach. See e.g. Cantu, (2002), Lubheid (2004), and Manalansan, (2006) for more information on the theme of queer and migration.

Furthermore, if, as it has been argued that the act of remitting is grounded in familial norms of respecting an implicit contractual agreement between migrants and their families prior to migration as argued by the New Economics of Migration theorists²⁰, then we need to understand what are the sanctions (if any) for breaking of such contracts. Therefore in order to grasp all these intricacies in the family-migration-remittance nexus, I situate the sending and receiving of remittances within a moral economy model.

Also, the unilateral approach to the study of remittances overlooks the complex nature of migrants' relationship with families in countries of origin. Also, it is said that migrants remit due to moral concerns for their families as asserted by De Bruyn and Wets, (2006). Therefore it is important to see remittances as one of the social roles that migrants and their families are engaged in. Thus, such roles must be understood as embedded in social and kinship ties and are grounded in structured sets of power relations within family settings. In this sense, the "determinant" and "motivation" model that preoccupies research on family-migration-remittance remains insufficient. For it does not allow for a comprehensive, thorough, in-depth understanding of the various ways through which gender norms as well as familial relationships and roles are [re]defined and [re]negotiated through remittances and remitting behaviour patterns. It is only through an in-depth socio-anthropological study that we can better capture the socio-cultural dynamics of the family-migration-remittance nexus. This approach /research agenda will broaden our knowledge in terms of understanding why, how, when, how often, and to whom migrants remit. In the next sections of this book, I go beyond an econometric "determinant" and "motivation" model and situate remittances within a wider spectrum; that is, within a moral economy.

²⁰ The NEM theorists consider migration as a family strategy to minimise risk and diversify income. These theorists make the case that migration projects are embedded in an implicit contractual agreement between migrants and their families. See section on theoretical framework in this chapter for a broader analysis.

Remittances: the moral economy perspective

In situating international migrants' remittances within a moral economy approach, it is important to first understand what is moral economy? To answer this question, I revisit the concept of moral economy as it was first used by English economic historian E.P. Thompson (1971) and how the concept has been used in other disciplines including anthropology.

Moral economy re-visited

The concept of moral economy dates back to E. P. Thompson studies on the 18th century food riots in England. In his study of the making of the English class first published in 1963 [1971], Thompson described these food riots as non-violent acts that cannot be seen just as mere political demonstrations to reclaim feudal rights, but also as demonstrations to reclaim social justice by advocating for fair prices for all. He writes that:

“It is of course true that riots were triggered off by soaring prices, by malpractices among dealers, or by hunger. But these grievances within a popular consensus as to what were legitimate and were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc. this in its turn was grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor. An outrage to these moral assumptions, quite as much as actual deprivation, was the usual occasion for direct action... Hence this moral economy impinged very generally upon eighteenth-century government and thought, and did not only intrude at moments of disturbance. The word “riot” is too small to encompass all this” (Thompson, 1971: 78-79).

From the foregoing, one can deduce that in Thompson's sense, moral economy is a historical factor consisting of complex set of attitudes and norms of justice and fairness amongst popular classes. Looking at his analysis, one can say that two themes are central:

firstly, there are protests, what he calls “riots” which are the result of high prices of food. Secondly, there is the peasants’ conception of rights, fairness, and social justice. These are the motivations that provoked peasants’ resistance. Thompson sees these peasants’ conception of justice as socially embodied historical factors that help us to understand the actions by a set of actors, and in particular to explain the meaning of peasants’ rebellion. This, to him is what constitutes the moral economy of the crowd.

Hence according to Thompson, moral economy is concerned with the way peasants interpret their relations with their rulers in times of dearth. He stated that:

“My object of analysis was the *mentalité*, or, as I would prefer, the political culture, the expectations, traditions, and , indeed, superstitions of the working population most frequently involved in actions in the market; and the relations — sometimes negotiations — between the crowd and the rulers which go under the unsatisfactory term “riot”. It is not only that there is an identifiable bundle of beliefs, usages and forms associated with the marketing of food in times of dearth, which it is convenient to bind together in a common term, but the deep emotions stirred by dearth, the claims which the crowd made upon the authorities in such crises, and the outrage provoked by profiteering in life-threatening emergencies, imparted a particular “moral” charge to protest. All of this, taken together, is what I understand by moral economy” (Thompson, 1991: 260,337-338).

In anthropology, the term moral economy was first used by James Scott, (1976) in his study on South East Asia rice farmers. Scott used the term to examine these peasant farmers sense of agency based on shared standards of justice. He writes that:

“Viewing from another perspective, however, we can learn a great deal from rebels who were defeated nearly half-a century ago. If we understand the indignation and rage which prompted them to risk everything, we can grasp what I have chosen to call their moral economy: their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation—their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which intolerable. In so far as their moral economy is representative of peasants elsewhere, and I believe I can

show that it is, we may move toward a fuller appreciation of the normative roots of peasant politics” (Scott, 1976: 3-4).

The “subsistence ethic” which Scott defines as living close to the margin (pg. 2) is central to his conceptualization of moral economy. To him, this ethic is what characterized peasant societies. What one can extrapolate from Scott’s analysis is that, this “subsistence ethic” means a right to subsistence. Moreover, one can also infer that human socio-economic and political actions are powerfully influenced by what define its subsistence ethic. He maintains that this subsistence ethic is rooted in economic practices and social exchanges of peasant societies, both as a moral principle and as a right (pg.6)²¹. In analysing the theses of both Thompson and Scott, one can see that moral economy is about the social psychology and agency of the peasants. But beyond these, we learned that individuals, families, and groups’ actions are motivated by internally embodied sense of justice. Yet, there are those who think that the concept moral economy as was first used in anthropology by Scott, (1976) is not without its own limitations. Here, I revisit the work of Samuel Popkin.

Popkin, (1979) thinks that the concept moral economy as used by Scott, (1976) is limited when one attempts to apply it to a broader contexts as for e.g. in his study about Vietnam where he sought to understand the impact of colonialism, the expansion of the markets, and the formation of central states on peasant society. Unlike Scott, Popkin described these peasants’ behaviour from a political economy model. In his political economy framework, he maintains that peasants are continually faced with economic decisions and their assessments of risks and their choices among various investment strategies shape their relationships with their families, village, patrons, and the world beyond the village. He proposed “a view of the peasant as a rational problem-solver, with a sense both of his own and of the need to bargain with others to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes” (pg. ix). For him, Scott’s and other authors’ theses on moral economy is further limited because it focuses on the relations between economic and social institutions. This approach is based on

²¹It is this subsistence ethic that preoccupies Polachek, (1983) study on the moral economy of the Kiangsi

a set of assertions about villages, patron-client relations, and market activity based on assumptions about peasant's goals and behaviour (3-4, 8-13). For the moral economists, "it is the subsistence ethic that provides the perspective from which peasants view claims on their resources... They show that many of the norms and procedures of peasant society are embedded in considerations of subsistence and survival; they see the village as a ritual and cultural unit and also an important part of peasant economic life as a source of rights and resources" (15-16). Popkin criticised this assumption of the moral economists because for him, moral economy extends beyond villages and other precapitalist or non-industrial societies. Therefore the moral economists can be criticised because their theory lives some questions unanswered, for instance: "what determines the "subsistence level"? How are village resources allocated? How are competing claims of need assessed and resources distributed? When is it the responsibility of the village, as opposed to the responsibility of the family, friends, children, or patrons, to help a needy peasant"? (pg.16). It is based on these criticisms of moral economy that he opted to use a political economy approach to analyse the peasant society of Vietnam in its precolonial, colonial, and (early) revolutionary periods.

In sum, while Scott's moral economy focuses on shared moral values, conceptions of justice, and obligations binding peasant's behaviour, Popkin's political economy underscores peasant's economic rationality and self-interest—insisting that peasants are rational agents, making thoughtful decisions about their needs, interest, and choices.

Despite the shortcomings of moral economy that Popkin pointed out, over the years, the concept has remain valuable in attempting to describe and explain not only peasant's social relations behaviour, but also including other aspects of social life that are non-susceptible to market regulations.

While Powelson, (2000) sees moral economy as a balance of power between social groups, Sayer, (2000: 79, 93) rather thinks that moral economy embodies the norms and sentiments regarding the responsibilities and rights of individuals and institutions with respect to others. These norms go beyond matters of justice and equality, to

conceptions of the good for e.g. regarding needs and the ends of economic activity. He acknowledged families as important economic units and argued that relations and practices within family settings are influenced by a combination of power, convention, and moral commitment.

Sayer, (2000) considers families as economic institutions and as such they are socially embedded and vary across societies (Sayer, 2004: 1-3)²². He broadened his analysis of moral economy to various kinds of economic and non-economic activities. He maintains that, morality concerns the norms (formal and informal), values, and dispositions of behaviours that affect others. Our relationship or interactions with others are often guided by certain conceptions of *the good* (emphasis added) and the bad. Hence the moral dimension is unavoidable in any relation; economic relations are no exception to that. Sayer underlines the fact that just as in all socio-cultural relations, economic relations are structured by moral norms about rights, entitlements, responsibilities, and appropriate behaviour. Economy for him refers to all forms of provisioning including those outside the cash economy.

Just as the term moral economy has been studied and understood in different academic disciplines, it has also proved to be helpful in understanding different social practices²³. For example Olivier de Sardan, (1999) used the term in his study of corruption in Africa, Sugimura, (2004b) even talks of an African form of moral economy in rural communities. Didier Fassin has used it in his study on the immigration policies in France. He sees moral economy as the moral values and norms by which immigration policies are thought through and acted on. He described these policies as “full of passion and norms, of feelings and stereotypes. Strong beliefs and deep prejudices are expressed about the legitimacy and utility of certain categories of individuals, about their future and about their obligations and rights” (Fassin, 2005: 365-366). He broadened his analysis by defining moral economy as « la production, la répartition, la circulation et l’utilisation

²²Bernstein, (2007: 2) shares the same proposition that families, just as all economic institutions and practices are socially embedded.

²³ See for example the International Max Plank Research School (IMPRS) for the study of Moral Economies in Germany.

des sentiments moraux, des émotions et des valeurs, des normes et des obligations dans l'espace social » (Fassin, 2009: 1257).

At this juncture, we can see that while the concept moral economy was first used as a way of understanding peasant communities' sense of justice and agency concerning their social relations and social behaviours vis-à-vis the local economy and their rulers, today, the concept has been widely applied in different fields of studies including migration studies. For instance in this study, I have used moral economy to describe relations between migrants and their families. In the light of this, the question here is: how does the concept moral economy function as a component of social enquiry in relation to transnational Cameroonian migration and remittance flows?

Moral economy in the study of Cameroonian transnational migration and remittance flows.

Moral economy as used in this study refers to the social norms and obligations that guide the broad social networks of friendship, consanguinity, and affinity in which migrants and non-migrants belong²⁴. My approach of moral economy is inspired by Scott (1976) thesis on peasants' *technical* and *social arrangements*. These arrangements evolve through the peasantry's efforts to iron out the "ripples that might drown a man" (quotation marks in original), that is, the socio-economic conditions that can place a human being within a poverty trap. In addition, it includes patterns of reciprocity and forced generosity. Adopting these strategies is what help to even out the inevitable paucity in a family's resources which, if not, might have thrown them below subsistence (Scott, 1976: 2-3).

These same *social arrangements* are very much present within family circles in Cameroon. As Mbembe and Roitman (1995) have shown,

²⁴This moral economy model as used here understands migration and remittance flows beyond the altruism and self-interest agendas which hitherto dominate migration scholarship. See for e.g. the studies of Argawal and Horowitz (2002), Fonchamnyo (2012), Antoniadis et al (2013), Rapoport and Docquier (2005), Boughga-Hagbe (2006), Tchouassi and Sikod (2010), Kemeque and Owusu-Sekyere (2010) on altruism and remittances flow to Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Latin America, and India.

contemporary Cameroon is marked by a routinized state of crises. As a result, Nyamnjoh (1999) maintains that Cameroonians have adopted many “survival strategies” to cope with the present economic downturn. These “survival strategies” resonate with the New Economics theory Migration thesis which sees migration as a family strategy to minimize risks and diversify income. Given that the majority of Cameroonians can be described as living at the margins, transnational migration and remittances has become one of their ways to cope with subsistence problems²⁵.

Although social movements and not families were the central focus in Thompson (1971) conception of moral economy, it is important to be conscious of the fact that family settings are also sites where moral values, duties/responsibilities, and obligations are developed, mediated, socialized, and enacted. Being a socio-cultural and economic institution, a family as a micro unit within the larger society embodies specific morals and emotional codes, which family members are asked/’forced’ to accept and appropriate. Obviously, moral norms that regulate ‘proper’ behaviours within family settings can sometimes be contested and fought over.

The moral economy of transnational Cameroonian remittance flows seeks to understand how norms (both moral and economic) are mobilized in decisions to migrate and to remit for Cameroonian migrants and their families. Adepoju, (1995: 329) confirms that there is an aspect of morality in [African] transnational migration. He maintains that in deciding who migrates, families tend to choose the person with the greatest potential for remittances. Hence, if human interactions are often guided by conceptions of the good as Sayer, (2004) argues, then judging from Adepoju, (1995) assertion, one can say that in deciding who migrates, families decision tend to be guided by a conception of, (as compared to others) who has *the good heart* to remit? Who has the *good heart to care* for the family? Given the fact that migration is an investment with returns expectations²⁶, those who

²⁵ I have shown in chapter 5 that transnational migration from Cameroon has shifted from being motivated by education purposes to a migration pattern which in local parlance is described as a “huzzling”-type of migration.

²⁶ I have shown in chapter 6 the various ways through which families invest in migration, mainly through raising money for migration projects.

migrate are not randomly chosen by their families. Families chose those who are ‘smart/sharp’, meaning those who are hardworking and who possess the greatest potential to respect moral norms of caring for families. This culminates in families tending to privilege the migration of daughters over sons nowadays.

Since transnational migration and remittances has in many ways become one of the fundamental ways to cope with subsistence problems for most Cameroonian families, it is very important that families make the ‘right’ decision in terms of choosing the ‘right’ person to migrate; they have to choose someone who will “keep to the promise”. This understanding invites us to consider that when families adopt risks minimizing behaviour²⁷ through migration, conflicts and tensions are common occurrences provoked when moral concerns between family members are not respected²⁸.

During fieldwork from 2011 for my master degrees theses as well as my PhD research, when asked about remittances, migrants often say: “I send remittances because I have the feeling for my family, I have the concern for my family, I cannot be stingy, especially with those who have helped me, I need to have a good heart towards my family, I cannot leave my family to suffer, you cannot see someone suffering and refuse to help”. One migrant told me “one cannot have a bad heart towards one’s family. Even when things are tough/difficult, how can one do...?”²⁹ What I grasp from these responses is that remittances are guided by moral dispositions of being/doing good towards one’s family and friends. In this line of thought, the thread of analysis in this book centres on how remittance practices shaped and are shaped by moral claims while highlighting how such claims may be strengthened or re-articulated due to economic pressures³⁰.

²⁷ Or “risk-averse” behaviour (Scott, 1976: 4).

²⁸ For example conflicts that arise due to the migrant’s failure to remit, or his/her decision to remit to a sibling or to his/her mother to the exclusion of other family members. Conflicts and tensions also arise when migrants do not remit as much as expected. Such remittance conflicts are often characterised by witchcraft accusations, see chapters 8 and 9.

²⁹ The original quote in Pidgin English reads: “man no fit get bad heart for e family. Even when things dem no di waka, how man go do...”

³⁰ I have described this as the moral economy of remittances in chapter 8.

A moral economy agenda also informs us that in responding to family obligations through remittances, migrants are caught in a dialectical relationship which has to do with satisfying family needs, and living up to the expectation to be or not to be labelled as a 'good' or 'bad' migrant. Migrants themselves are aware of such labels and the repercussion associated to being considered a bad migrant, therefore they devise strategies to respond to remittance demands from families. An example of this is to buy and send a car to be used as taxi thereby providing a daily source of income and reducing frequent demands for remittances. Another example is to bring over a sibling abroad, in that way the burden of remittances is not only on one person. Nonetheless, migrants told me, "in sending home remittances, I am helping my family and pleasing my God". One of my informants puts it this way: "the country (Cameroon) has become so difficult, everyone wants to fall bush ...but what is the need for falling bush if it is not to better your life and that of your family".

Such statements are inherent in Cameroonian beliefs that providing to one's parents breathes blessings and prosperity as enshrined in the biblical texts of Proverbs 22: 9 which say "He who is generous will never lack..." In Hebrews 13: 16, it is written that "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God". These attitudes of care towards families are also rooted in African traditional beliefs that one needs to give in order to be given. Therefore in the midst of all these feelings, obligations, and moral dispositions associated with sending and receiving remittances, a moral economy aids us to unravel these nuances.

Remittances and transnational ties: towards a moral economy of flows.

Having examined moral economy as a component of analysis in transnational migration and remittances, these later subsections will focus on examining transnational flows of remittances from a moral economy perspective. As one would probably notice, the concept has been scantily studied in migration scholarship in general except for

Fassin, (2005) and Heyman, (1998) who have made some efforts to integrate moral economy into migration scholarship.

Although these authors' analyses focused on nation-states (France and United States respectively) policies towards immigrants and refugees, their analyses are useful in a number of ways: Firstly it provides a base for understanding migration through moral economy. Secondly, their studies provide an important lens through which we can understand not only the economic impacts of remittances on economies, households and families, but also, and most importantly, a lens through which we can understand the *symbolic* meanings of remittance flows. Given that remittances are both financial and non-financial, Levitt (1998) call on us to expand our analysis beyond the economic paradigm to include cultural values since such values influences the developmental impact of remittances. In addition, the relevance of employing a moral economy approach to the study of migration and remittances is that it does incorporate as Thompson, (1991: 341) says, a concept of social reciprocity. This, according to Moore, (1978) quoted in (Thompson, 1991) is about mutual obligation "which does not imply equality of burdens..." but is concern more about mutual exchanges of cooperation.

From the foregoing, remittance flows can be seen as part of a system of reciprocity in which social relations are embedded. Sahlin, (1974: 170) draws our attention to the fact that reciprocity is a "between" relation. For Finch and Mason, (1991: 364, 1993: 167) it is about responsibilities and commitments between and among family and friends and this entails a two or more processes of engagements in which people are giving and receiving. Therefore, obligations, seen as duties to families and friends are not fixed but develop and are continually (re)negotiated as people interact. Finch and Mason (1991) observed that when people move, they do not carry around them stable sets of values and meanings about obligation to kin, but rather construct them when they have to, out of various materials available. Accordingly, the flow of remittances could be understood as a way of maintaining ties across geographical spaces. The migrants remit to their families and friends and in turn benefit from them when they are also in need of certain services or

resources from home. With the case of Cameroonian migrants, they benefit from the families back home in terms of the services in executing migrants' projects, taking care of migrants' children left behind, as well as receiving other items such as clothing, traditional medicine, and food stuff sent from home.

Remittances flow as exchanges

In this subsection, I provide an analysis of remittances flow as exchanges. To do this, I revisit mainly the anthropological work of Monsutti (2004, 2005a) with Afghan migrants and that of Mazzucato (2009b, 2010) with Ghanaian migrants and their families which look very much alike to the case of Cameroonian migrants. I find these studies most interesting and relevant to this research due to these authors' efforts to understand remittances flow as exchanges.

In contrast to mainstream analysis of remittances as flows from migrants to families at home, Monsutti's studies (2004, 2005a) on Afghan migrants and refugees provide a broader view of remittances. It exemplifies how remittances tend to become a basis of cooperation in situation of war and migration. Using the case of the Hazaras of Afghanistan, he examines the *Hawala* system which is an informal remittance system used by the Hazaras to send money home to their families (Monsutti, 2004: 226-240). In the *Hawala* system, Monsutti described how money flows from the migrants and refugees—workers (*kargar*) living in Iran and Pakistan and managed by *hawaladar* who are trusted merchants, middlemen/smugglers (*dallals*) who then delivers the money to the migrants family back in Afghanistan.

Besides its economic significance, the *hawala* system “allows for the reproduction of social ties despite insecurity and dispersion. The exchanges taking place through the circulation of people, documents, goods, and money symbolized, in the original meaning “put together”, Hazara society” (pg.239). He further notes that remittances through the *hawala* system are considerably larger, and much more widely distributed, than the sum of humanitarian aid. The Afghans themselves are aware of this because they considered these transfers as their “drip” (source of subsistence—my interpretation) (Monsutti, 2005a: 242). It's these transfers flowing through the *hawala*

system that has helped the Afghan society to subsist amidst great tension and insecurity (pg.243). The pattern of exchanges which Monsutti invokes here is that of a circular relationship of migration, money transfer, and the reproduction of social ties embedded in trusted networks of friendship and solidarity but not void of conflicts (Monsutti, 2004, 2005a: 188-203,238-243). For him, the hawala system allows for the reproduction of social ties and cooperation. In this line of thought, the flow of remittances is not only to satisfy families' immediate financial needs but it is also a means for migrants to maintain ties with their families at home. Therefore it makes sense to conclude as in the words of Sahlins, (1974: 183, 186) that the material flow of remittances sustain social relations.

To describe the form of exchanges taking place between migrants and their families, Mazzucato has invoked the term reverse remittances in her study of Ghanaian migrants which is a counter narrative to the traditional uni-directional comprehension of remittances. Although Sorensen, (2005: 9) study shows that families' unbounded demands for remittances negatively affect migrants, Mazzucato, (2009b, 2010) asserts that the act of sharing is a central feature in transnational social ties. She maintains that in the Ghanaian contexts, the acts of sharing and reciprocation is strongly enforced such that failure to comply may result to one being ostracized and cut off from the various forms of social support between neighbors, friends, family and the wider community. Using the case of Ghanaian migrants in Netherlands and their families in Ghana, she shows that there is a considerable flow of remittances from families to migrants. These flows, what she calls *reverse* remittances defined as a form of exchange that allows people back home to create and maintain reciprocity with migrants include food, tailored clothes, medicines, child care, providing services in house construction, and obtaining documents for legalizing migration stay abroad (Mazzucato, 2010: 457, 463).

Mazzucato's thesis provides an alternative view to the literature on migrants' remittances which almost conventionally places family

at the receiving end³¹. In contemporary times, where motivations for migration go beyond economic difficulties, Mazzucato (2009b, 2010) studies invite us to be keen to the services and resources flowing from families to migrants no matter how small such flows might be. Unlike like Mazzucato, (2010), I have described this family flows to migrants as gift-remitting. For me, it is more about the symbolism of such flows, than of the quantity.

Therefore, if we see remittances as the basis for [transnational] social ties, then it is relevant to understand how and why the act of remitting thus translates into an acknowledgement of who [rightfully] belongs to a family network and who does not. The flow of remittances also sets the basis for which ‘good’ and ‘bad’ migrants are differentiated by migrants’ families in the countries of origin. In sum, I would say that patterns of remittance reciprocity are specific and varies according to particular regions, countries, and culture (that is, the social processes through which migrants and their families socialize and have been socialized).

Theories on transnational migration and remittances

In this section, I seek to examine some of the migration theories that are relevant to my study. Migration is multifaceted and cuts across disciplines, as a result, no single theory alone can provide a comprehensive understanding of migrants’ flows. Rather, what is required is a variety of theories that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels and assumptions (Massey et al, 1993: 432, Brettell and Hollifield, 2000).

These theories provide information to our understanding on the initiation of migration (neoclassical economic theory), the perpetuation of migration (network theory), and the determinants of these flows (New Economics theory of Migration—NEM). It is worth mentioning that these theories are not mutually exclusive, they are in many ways inter-related. For example due to varied socio-economic differences between the developed and the developing

³¹ E.g. even the New Economics theory of Migration theorists that sees migration as a family affair ignore the various forms of symbolic flows from family to migrants.

countries, people mostly move from the South to the North (the push-pull theory). The low per capita income in many developing countries adversely affects households and individuals in such a way that individuals and families tend to see migration as a means to reduce risks and maximise incomes, or an escape route to a better life abroad (NEM theorists). Also migrants' social networks are instrumental for migrants' incorporation and such networks extend beyond a single country. Migrants tend to be engaged in different transnational activities (network theory, and transnationalism). At any given time, migrants' migratory and remittance trajectories are shaped by their gender, class (rich or poor), race (ethnicity), religion, and sexuality (intersectionality theorists). Therefore the context within which migration decisions are made, that is, within families and households, are shaped by socio-economic forces operating both nationally and internationally.

Migration theories provide invaluable insights to contextual understanding and analyses to some of the major questions often asked:

1. Who migrates and why? To where? For how long?
2. Who remits and why? To whom? How?
3. What are the impacts of migration and remittances to the economies of both migrant sending and receiving countries?

Network theory

The underlying argument in this theory is that migration takes place within a larger spectrum of friends and kinship networks that provide the needed assistance to would-be migrants. Massey et al (1993) maintain that the first migrant who leaves for a new destination incurred all the costs because he doesn't have any social ties especially when the migrant enters illegally. The cost of migration is subsequently reduced for friends and families coming after him/her. Overtime, migrants are inevitably linked to non-migrants and aspiring migrants in the country of origin and the latter rely on implicit obligations of friendship and kinship for assistance in the country of destination. This model holds that the migration of one

family member or friend encourages further migration through social ties and obligations.

In addition, through well-established network systems, the first migrants do not only facilitate the subsequent migration of others through declining cost, but also through declining risks—“every new migrant expands the network and reduces risks of movement for all those to whom s/he is related, eventually making it virtually risk-free and costless to diversify household labour allocations through emigration” (Massey et al, 1993: 449, 2005). Therefore the decision to migrate takes place within the context of the individual, the family/household, and non-kin (friends) acting together to reduce cost and minimise risk for subsequent migrants.

Also, network theory help explains how social networks (e.g. friends, families, migration brokers) shape the outcome of Cameroonian migration to Europe. Toma and Vause, (2011) maintain that although social networks are important, it has seldom been central to African transnational migration studies compared to other regions of migratory flow such as Mexico-US.

By linking individuals across borders, social networks facilitate migratory flow in many ways including choice of destination and route of migration. They may also help to facilitate the integration of migrants upon arrival e.g. in finding jobs, access health care, getting a residence permit. As a matter of fact, differences in network dynamics (which are related to differences in states immigration policies) may account for divergent social, economic, and legal integration of immigrant women and men. All these affect migrants’ remittance behaviour (Toma and Vause, 2011: 5-6, Poros 2011, Hagan 1998: 56). Cameroonian migrants rely on these social networks to migrate and to remit.

New Economics theory of Migration (NEM)

Stark and Bloom, (1985) were one of the earliest authors to write on the NEM³². As a matter of fact, this theory has become an inescapable classic in any study related to [labour] migration and

³² The New Economics theory of Migration (NEM) is sometimes called the New Economics theory of Labour migration. Both meaning the same thing with the same central argument. But for this book, I use NEM.

remittances. NEM theorists argue that migration decisions are based on family needs for income diversification and risk minimisation. Hence migration is determined by the decision-making and objective of a group as a collective, usually a family or members of a household rather than an individual. Because migration is a family and not an individual affair, costs and benefits are shared in an “implicit contractual agreement between two parties” —the migrant, and the family (Stark and Bloom, 1985: 174, Stark and Lucas, 1988). Such implicit arrangements transcend into mutual altruism; that is care and responsibility for one another which explains why the family is central to the migration decision. Grimard, (1997: 342,397) adds that migration and remittances as a risk diversity strategy extends beyond the nuclear to the extended family as well as amongst members of the same ethnic group.

In the case of African emigration, Adepoju (1995: 329) maintains that senior members play a leading role in deciding who migrate and who does not. The person with the greatest potential of supporting the household through remittances is chosen. Most, if not all countries in Sub-Sahara Africa lack formal insurance systems, therefore families tend to depend on each other for help when the need arises³³. This mutual helping or ‘co-insurance’ covers risks of losing income and allows the family to smooth its consumption (Stark, 1991: 39). Nyarko and Gyimah-Brempong (2010: 11) add that such mutual form of help is crucial for the survival of households of developing countries because this serves as “social safety nets”; the migrant from such countries becomes what Poirine (1997: 590) called the insurer. Hence remittances accruing from migration are not a random by-product of an individual, but rather an integral part of a family’s strategy for sustenance (Stark, 1991: 39).

However, Stark, (1991) cautions that, individuals should not be overlooked when the family is placed at the centre of a migration decision. He suggests that individual behaviour should be explored within the context of the family.

³³ Mazzucato, (2006) study confirms that remittances from migration act as insurance schemes for most families in Sub-Saharan Africa. Families tend to rely on remittances for their survival.

Transnationalism

The concept of transnationalism and its related terms such as transnational communities and transnational circuits have gained increased attention in the anthropology of migration. From an anthropological point of view, transnationalism describes in particular, the cultural pattern that cuts across states borders which primarily highlights kinship and networks (Heisler, 2000, Brettel, 2000, and Lewellen, 2002)³⁴. Transnationalism according to Vertovec, (2009: 3) depicts the sustained and on-going processes among actors across national borders such as travel and trade in goods and services as well as individuals sharing the same interests by way of certain criteria such as religious beliefs, common cultural and geographic origin. The collective attributes of such connections, their processes of formation and maintenance, and their widespread implications are referred to broadly as ‘transnationalism’.

In contemporary times, migrants have multiple ties and processes of identification, as a result kinship ties have moved from largely local to global³⁵. As the economic interaction between migrants and family and kinship networks enlarges, the relationship between ‘home’ and ‘host’ societies are becoming restructured (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002: 4). In this line of thought, Brettel, (2003: xvii) distinguishes between transnationalism from above and transnationalism from below. The former is synonymous with globalisation and concerned with macroeconomic policies, while the latter is concerned with everyday life of people; that is, the social networks that people and particularly migrants forge across territorial defined boundaries.

³⁴ Transnationalism is embedded in global flows; global flows are two words that are best captured by the term globalisation. This globalisation does not only involve the transnational mobility of people, goods, services, and ideas; rather, such flows are part of a larger socio-cultural network which Appadurai, (1996) described as the *Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*.

³⁵ Kearney, (1995), Hannerz, (1996) and Lewellen, (2002: 29-32) maintain that the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ are connected. Thus they caution that it is important not to overlook the various ways through which the local affects the global and vice versa (that is how global forces impinge on local communities, households and individuals and their reaction to it).

Individual migrants are not often fixed in specific locations, but move across national territories. Accordingly, some scholars advocate for a transnationalism approach that study these migrants and their different transnational activities e.g. (Baubouck and Faist 2010, Faist 2010a, b, 2000, Vertovec 2009, Kivisto 2001, Schiller et al 1995, 1992a, Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Portes et al 1999). Schiller et al, (1995: 48) call on migration scholars to shift from the concept of immigrants to transmigrant due to the multi-stranded relations that link migrants in their community of settlement and origin. They maintain that:

“Once we reframe the concept of immigrant and examine the political factors which have shaped the image of immigrants as the uprooted, a whole new approach to understand immigrants and the current debate about immigration becomes possible...” (pg. 48)

In understanding migrants’ transnational experiences, it is also relevant to grasp how migrants continually (re)create and sustain transnational practices through different social networks across transnational spaces/transnational social fields. Faist (2000: 202, 2010a,) distinguishes between 3 types of transnational spaces: transnational familiar connections (reciprocity), transnational circulation (exchange of goods, human capital, information, ideas), and transnational communities (solidarity, collective identity, common symbols). Similar to Faist (2000), Vertovec (2001: 575) describes ‘transnational spaces’ as forms of transnational contacts which include: remittances, marriage alliances, religious activities, media and commodity consumption, and homeland politics.

On their part Al-Ali and Koser (2002) suggest that we should shy away from the categorisation of migrants into economic and non-economic migrants (refugees); that is to go beyond migration motives. To them, this is the crux of transnationalism, that is, to move the focus away from migration motives to uncover the ‘hidden’ aspects of many migrants’ lives. Although motivations are important in understanding how migrants develop transnational identities and engage in transnational lives, they are nonetheless no more important than other central factors such as gender, class, or race (pg.3).

Moreover, many national, multi-national and international policies play a role in managing various dimension of migrants' transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009: 120). Accordingly, Faist, (2010b: 86, 93) advocates a transnationalistic approach for the understanding of the life worlds of migrants and the symbolic ties they entertain into regions of origin and destination.

In line with Faist, (2010a, b) Monsutti, (2010: 110) also denounces a view of migrants as a homogenous group. They do not engage in transnational lives within homogenised spaces and groups, they are not bound within close units of localised communities. Their live pattern is constituted of, and shaped by their interaction with national and international actors (corporations) and institutions as well as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Therefore the temptation of seeing societies as isolated entities must be resisted, cautions Monsutti, (2010: 120). He argues that the construction of local identities should be understood in connection with the encompassing regional systems.

Feminist theory: the intersectionality of transnational migration

Gender, class, and ethnicity are core *signifiers-of-migration*³⁶ because they give particular meanings to individual migrants' trajectories and define their remittance behaviours. Nonetheless, these signifiers have been inadequately explored in studies on transnational migration and remittances especially for African migrants. Intersectionality is a useful analytical lens to understand these signifiers because it stresses that socio-cultural categories interlock. Kimberly Crenshaw, (1989) first introduced this concept that was broadened by Collins, (2000) in her study on black feminism where she examines the relationship between race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class, and nationality. According to this approach, social, cultural, and by extension economic factors are related and interlocked. Intersectionality has been widely used in women's studies due to its ability to analyse the complex nature of difference with regards to male and female socio-economic, cultural, and

³⁶ I borrowed the term signifier from Clifford, (1994) in his study on diasporas.

political behaviour. As an analytical concept, Davis, (2008) maintains that it can be universally applicable within the social sciences depending on how the researcher analyse his/her subject matter.

Brooks and Redlin, (2009) were among the first scholars to introduce the concept of intersectionality in migration research. They adopted this framework in explaining the chances of white, black, and Hispanic male and female individuals engaging in rural-urban migration³⁷. For them, intersectionality examines how social characteristics influence people's life experience and their decision to migrate. They noted that, the experiences that people go through in life are related to their race/ethnicity, gender, and class (pg. 131). Other authors have sought to broaden Brooks and Redlin (2009) thesis on intersectionality and migration for example Bürker, (2012). For him, intersectionality provides important insights into the study of migration especially because it addresses issues of migrants' gender, age, body (sexuality), and general social inequality (class). In relation to inequality, Bürker makes the case that intersectionality gives a comprehensive view of individual migrants' structural and cultural embeddings (pg. 186-188). Sinatti, (2014) has also use intersectionality in her study to examine how gender interlocks with other economic variables in re-shaping the-male-bread winner model for Senegalese migrants³⁸.

From an intersectionality perspective, it is evident that gender has to a limited extent been examined in studies on migrants' remittances; yet, the issue of class hitherto has been sidelined and obscured. Instead of being interested in a sociological or anthropological-feminist study of class, I am primarily concerned with how migrants' social class status influences their remittance behaviour patterns. For

³⁷ In line with Brooks and Redlin, (2009), Cameroonian migrants are differentiated by language—English speaking versus French speaking, by gender, class, ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, employment and income status, documented and undocumented, and by religious affiliations.

³⁸ Sinatti (2014) observation for Senegalese migrants falls in line with an earlier observation made by Joan Scott, (1986: 1066-1086) that gender is constructed through different structures—kinship, the economy, and polity. See also Coward, (1999) who noted that contemporary economic conditions and advances in the fight for women's rights have challenged the traditional patriarchal male breadwinner and male-only migration models.

me, class is used as a way to distinguish Cameroonians from rich families (upper class) against Cameroonians from poor families (lower class)³⁹ since the latter are those who migrate to seek for economic opportunities.

In social sciences, gender, class, and ethnicity/race have been studied and analysed separately; Vogel, (2000) claims that these distinctive analysis has to do with the different disciplinary backgrounds from which these concepts originate—class originated from a more Marxian and Weberian sociological school while gender owes its birth to feminist studies. However, the intersectionalists rather argued that these factors although distinct, interlock to shape the outcome of individuals' [migrants'] trajectories, (for as Acker, 2006 argues, as human beings we are enmeshed in class relations). It is in this line of thought that Hondagneu-Sotelo, (2000: 114) maintains that both class and ethnicity impact on gender or more specifically on the social conceptualization of masculinity and femininity and that these “constructions of masculinity and femininity organize migration and migration outcome” as well as remittances⁴⁰.

Class primarily is concerned with the idea of inequality that distinguishes families in Cameroon⁴¹. This inequality constitutes the

³⁹ This means that I do not include those Cameroonian migrants from the wealthy class e.g. children of top civil service men, business men, and politicians who migrate to Europe to study and fly back to Cameroon every holidays. I am primarily concerned with those who come from families where the financial means for migration is not so readily available. See chapter 3.

⁴⁰ See also Anthias, (2001a, b) and Mahler and Pessar, (20006: 29) who maintain that although “gender is a principal factor that organizes social life [...]. Yet gender cannot be viewed and analysed in isolation. Rather gender is dynamic and it articulates with other axis of differentiation ...” (e.g. class, ethnicity, age, religion).

⁴¹ Bayart, (1979, 1984, and 1986) asserts that the applicability of the class concept in Cameroon is highly ambiguous because it tends to distort the fluid lines of inequality. He prefers to talk about networks of accumulation. However, Jua, (1988) insists that class formation constitute one of the salient features of state formation in post-colonial Cameroon. For him, Cameroon is divided between the petty bourgeoisies (who are the governing class) against the impoverished masses. The former have an insatiable desire to retain power, wealth, and status. They comprise of members of the government, hauts fonctionnaires, la haute magistrature, top officials (civilian and uniformed), members of parliament,

economic factors/determinants that in turn affect migration and remittances flow. While class is concerned with inequality, gender and ethnicity are primarily concerned with the symbolic, that is, the socio-cultural factors that affect male and female migration and remittance behaviours. Nonetheless, I would like to mention that these social signifiers of migration, that is gender, ethnicity, class, age, religious beliefs, and marital status are not fixed bounded categories but changes over space and time according to the migrants live experience.

In sum, the point I want to make here is that, migrant women just as their male counterparts are not a homogenous group, as argued by the transnationalists. They are heterogeneous and this according to McCall, (2005: 1780) is based on their distinctive experiences in their social locations— within their family as relatives linked to other relatives, or as people with sexual orientation that is approved or not in the local context. This is especially so in cases where people are force to migrate due to their sexuality—gays, lesbians, transgenders, and bisexuals.

In a nutshell, it can be said that beyond economic factors, sexual orientation can also instigate transnational migration in developing countries such as Cameroon where homosexual practices are largely condemned and punished. The flow of remittances thus involves a larger spectrum of simultaneous and mutually constitutive workings of the migrants' social identity differentiation, that is, the migrants' socio-economic and cultural embodiments. That is to say remittances flow is related to the embodied lifestyles, values, beliefs, and expected behaviour of migrants and non-migrants (their families) that are acquired through kinship patterns and the various activities and everyday experiences in the societies where they live and had lived.

businessmen directly involve with government, and leaders of para-public institutions. Membership into this class is usually obtained through co-optation. Due to the patrimonial nature of the state, a central characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie is the longevity of its members (pg. 742, 738-739).

Cameroonian transnational migration and remittances: A pluri-local research agenda

Introduction

This research is essentially based on qualitative research methods which include mainly participant observation and interviews (both formal and informal interviews) with the help of an interview guide with open ended questions. My doctoral fieldwork upon which this book is based officially began in the summer of 2013 (June-September) in Sweden. This period was meant to test the main ideas, (see appendix 6 for interview guide). I didn't have any difficulties locating informants because most of them were the same people among whom I conducted research for my master thesis in 2011. However, three out of the 8 formal interviews conducted in Sweden were not part of my 2011 studies. Some of the informants I worked with from 2009-2011 had migrated to other countries. For my master degree, I examined how gender and legality affected remittances flow for Cameroonian migrants (Atekmangoh 2011). So in 2013 when I approached my informants, the questions were different since my focus now was not on legality but the moral economy of these flows from a gender and familial perspective.

The data generated during this pilot study in Sweden enabled me to fine-tune my ideas while writing my Preliminary Thesis Dissertation (PTD). After the defence in February 2014, I conducted fieldwork in Switzerland and again in Sweden. This time, the interview guide questions had been updated following feedback on my PTD (see appendix 7 for interview guide 2014). Fieldwork in Switzerland and Sweden lasted from February to December 2014. I was principally based in Switzerland, mainly in the French speaking part and would go to Sweden from time to time and often communicated virtually with my informants there. From December 2014 to March 2015, I conducted field work in Cameroon with

migrants' families as well as other interlocutors including aspiring migrants, non-migrants, students, residents in the neighbourhood of Buea, retired Grassfield migrants who had migrated to the coast to work in the colonial plantations, migration brokers, to name a few.

Processes such as the sending of remittances are highly personal and undocumented migration in particular is highly sensitive therefore trust is needed for migrants to share their stories. Accordingly, I decided to use qualitative methods which were more appropriate for my study. In the paragraphs that follow, I will describe the research methods used, the various sites, and how I went about in generating my data. But before I do that, let me be explicit about my position as an informant and researcher.

Researcher and informant: a note on positionality

Abu-Lughod, (1993: 36, 40) writes that it is important for anthropologists as well as scholars from other disciplines to recognise the “positionality” of their work and that scholars need to be cognisant of their own “positionality”. Abu-Lughod challenges the notion of the ‘objective’ observer who supposedly stands outside of the realities of the objects/subjects being studied. She insists that what we call the outside or even the partial outside is always position *within* (italics in original) a larger political-historical context. The thesis of the researcher’s positionality vis-a-vis their subjects which Abu-Lughod talks about is part of a bigger methodological and epistemological problem discussed earlier by Bourdieu, (1972, [1977]) (1973), Diawara, (1985), and recently by Achieng, (2011). For Bourdieu, (1972: 1-5) there are always presuppositions inscribed in the relationship between the observer and objects of his study. He further maintains that the social world is subjected to three forms of knowledge: first, we have the phenomenological knowledge also known as “interactionist” or “ethnomethodological that provides our primary experience of the social world. The second form is *objectivist* knowledge and this entails a break with those tacitly assumed presuppositions conferred upon the social world. The third form is what Bourdieu called *praxeological* knowledge which is “concerned not only with the system of objective relations constructed by the

objectivist form of knowledge, but also with the *dialectical* relationships between these objective structures and the structured dispositions which they produce and which tend to reproduce them, i.e. the dual process of internalization of externality and the externalization of internality... It presupposes investigation into conditions of possibility and, consequently into the limit of objectivist viewpoint” (Bourdieu, 1973: 53)

Within this context of internal and external knowledge, Diawara, (1985: 5-11) ponders on the benefits and challenges of autochthones conducting research within their own contexts. He maintains that it is often advantageous to study within the context where one is familiar, (l'avantage d'être “chez soi”). This is because the researcher is familiar with the social practices of his subjects. Nonetheless this also poses some disadvantages e.g. in selecting which site (village) where the research should be carried out, where to stay (the host), and the choice of an intermediary.

In the wake of these challenges, Achieng, (2011) suggests that autochthones need to make their realities ‘strange’ in order to better understand them. For her, being an autochthone means that one cannot ‘see’ in new ways and thus conceptualise on the reality they partake of. Thus for the African social researchers, the question is how to strike a balance between being a subjective (knower) and obtaining objectivity (maintain a distance to what they know in order to explain it in a new way). She asserts that “as autochthones, we are both subjects and the objects of research. We have a double effect—like two sides of the same coin. This is what I call the mirror effect. Consequently, we have to make sense of what we see, experience or partake of” (Achieng, 2011: 141)⁴².

If, as Bourdieu noted, that thinking ‘objectively’ means that the researcher must break from the suppositions imposed by the social world and to reflect on his/her position vis-à-vis his subjects, and given the pros and cons involve in carrying out research in familiar contexts, it is preferable for autochthones to distant their realities in order to understand them as Achieng, (2011) noted. This mirror effect which Achieng, (2011) pointed out is what leads me to consider

⁴² Achieng, (2011) argument resonates with what Mbembe, (2002) describes as African modes of self-writing.

that I am both an informant and a researcher. While researching and writing this book, I remain conscious of my own positionality as a researcher and informant. I have tried as much as possible to remain objective in the way I analyse my data, yet I must say that the live realities of these informants reflect my own experiences regarding sending of remittances. Therefore I must acknowledge the fact that I am my own first informant!! But more importantly, this means that through this position, I can validate or invalidate information given to me by my informants. Reconciling this dichotomous role of researcher and informant means that I have had to distance myself under certain situations and circumstances in order to objectively examine/observe the experiences as they unfolded and to understand the narratives as revealed to me.

Despite the fact that I consider that I am my first informant, I must also say that sometimes I focused so much on the narratives of my informants that I tend to ignore that just like my informants, my own actions and interactions with my family also constitute part of what I am studying. For example when I shout at people back home not to call me and ask for money, or give strict instructions to my parents not to give out my telephone number to anyone without my permission, or when I switch off my phone when going to bed at night because I don't want to be awakened by an early morning 'beep' from sometimes unknown people from Cameroon who have probably gotten my number from one of my siblings or friends. Nonetheless I must say that this first-hand experience has also been a source of rich ethnographic data for this study.

After a lot of interaction and so many informal conversations, I asked Emelda who lives a few kilometres from the Geneva city centre if she would like to have a formal interview with me. She accepted without any hesitation and asked me to give her a call the following week because it would be more convenient for her. A week later, I called Emelda. It was 8.30pm, she picked up her phone and sounded like she was about to fall asleep. "Are you already sleeping, if so, sorry", I apologised. "No, no, no", she interrupted, "I was just lying and thinking about my many issues". "What issues?" I asked. "My sister, those issues are many, coming from all angles, but it is ok, it shall be well", she said. Then I continued, "I was calling so that we

can fix a date for the interview as discussed last time”, I said. “Which interview? You mean the interview on bushfalling and sending money to Cameroon”? She laughs as she concluded. “Yes”, I responded while laughing back. And immediately she reminded me of my status as an informant and a researcher. She puts it this way:

“But Christina why do you even bother to interview people, you know how these things work. Are you not a faller yourself? Don’t you send money home? Don’t you have family and friends back home, don’t you understand how difficult it is to get your permit renewed even when you are a full time student? I don’t see any need for you to interview people, you can just use your experiences and write your book. You know how it is...hahahahaha”

She laughed as she wrapped up her statements and I laughed back, then responded that, “I wish I could write the entire book without having to interview anybody, I acknowledge the fact that I know how these things work; nonetheless everyone has a different experience”. “You are right”, Emelda confirmed. I asked Emelda what she would prefer regarding where to meet for the interview and she decided that she would come over to my place. We fixed a date when she would come to my house for the interview, but before we rounded up our conversation, Emelda said: “my sister these problems back home will never end. But one needs to thank God for the journey so far, sometimes I asked myself if not me then who, everyone knows the kind of family background/situation that s/he comes from so we can’t compare ourselves with others. Everyone is trying to solve their problems according to their own capacities”⁴³. Emelda came and spent the weekend at my place; we went shopping, cooked, ate, and did the interview.

⁴³ Emelda’s statement was a mixture of Pidgin English and English, the original text reads thus: “my sister this pays wahala dem no go ever end (pays as in the French word for country, wahala is a Nigerian pidgin English slang for problems). But man need for thank God for the journey so far. Sometimes I asked myself if not me, then who? Any man know the kind background wey e comot, so we no fit compare ourselves with other people dem. Any man di try for solve e problem according to e own capacity”.

Emelda's statement that I don't need to interview people since I am also a faller and thus understand the processes that occur in the remittance trends for Cameroonian migrants means that my informants consider me as an "insider". In addition, being my first informant further legitimises my insider status. Abu-Lughod (1993) discussed this insider inter-subjective account of the researcher and his/her anthropological subjects in which being an insider facilitate access to very personal data and this uncovers narratives that are not usually documented in mainstream reality. Smith (2007: xiv-xv) in his study of corruption in Nigeria confirms that, being an insider can allow access to settings and experiences that are considered personal as well as access into the wider social networks of the subjects under study. Such entrée is useful in getting in-depth into the substance of the anthropological insider's perspectives. Nonetheless, I would say that this insider status has its own challenges in the fact that sometimes I might have overlooked certain details or take things for granted because I tend to see them as 'normal'. In a sense, it means that I might have unconsciously overlooked certain behaviours in relation to migrants' migration and remittance practices.

Another challenge of being an insider is that when I visited migrants' families in Cameroon, parents considered me as their own child (in the broad sense of child fosterage in Africa where one's children are not only limited to biological children). We went to church together and to the markets together. Sometimes I unconsciously got carried away in these familial circles of belonging, and in so doing my researcher role was side-lined. Yet the way forward in my intricate insider position was that when I returned to my place of residence, I wrote down all relevant information relating to my research during the days I spent in the homes of my informants' families.

Being a Cameroonian, my informants considered me as one of their very own, so the time lag that is required for trust to be established between the researcher and the study participants was not a big issue for me. My informants easily trusted me and shared their stories with me. This was especially the case when the interviews were informal. Through such intimacy, the migrants described to me their

migratory trajectories and their lived realities in relation to their remittances pattern as well as familial and non-familial relations.

Sometimes my discussion with informants started by each of us complaining about life in Cameroon and families situation there. This was especially the case when we met in beer parlours and Cameroonian parties. Also, when friends and friends of friends got frustrated with life in Europe in general and in particular when money that was sent was not used as instructed, we (me and my informants) sometimes did joke about it and said “we are working not for ourselves but for our families...” Being a migrant or better still a student migrant, my experiences offer a witness account, that is, a lens through which I could see and understand the experiences of my interlocutors.

In recounting his own experiences from being an undocumented migrant to a Professor of Anthropology at Stockholm University, Khosravi (2011) confirms that this witness account is powerful in telling the narratives as it should be told especially because the writer and the subjects’ experiences are similar and overlap. He writes that:

“Similarities between informants’ subjective experiences and my own blur the distinction between anthropologist and informants... Auto-ethnographic links the world of the author with the world of others. It bridges the gap between the anthropologist’s reality and the reality of others... The significance of the voice of the witness is that the witness has been there, has seen what happened. Witnesses have themselves lived the disaster, and might themselves be victims. They can re-tell the story and unfold the event with first-hand authority. This does not mean that witnesses, just because they are insiders possess the only authentic approach. The witness narrative is only one of many...” (2011: 5-6).

Although I am my first informant, this book is not about me; that is, it is not an auto-ethnography of migration and remittances nor on the impact of me as an anthropologist studying Cameroonian migration. Where I found it necessary, I have recounted examples from my own experiences and the events/processes that have shaped my life in the course of my six years in Europe. While researching for

my master and PhD theses, I have been astonished at how my informants' narratives confirm and recall my own experiences in relation to the sending of remittances. My informants' narratives and mine overlap even though we have distinctive migratory trajectories. I came to Europe as a *student on scholarship* while this is not the case for any of my informants.

I emphasised *student on scholarship* because this has allowed me to make certain choices and take certain actions. Student migrants on scholarship, in particular full scholarship belong to what I might call elite migrants. Elites in the sense that school fees and living expenses are being taken care of, although I must say this is never enough to meet up with various needs coming from family and friends at home. Even the monthly stipend that the student receives has to be shared between the migrant and his/her family in Cameroon. For example a student on scholarship at the Graduate Institute gets 1800CHF to cover basic living expenses in Switzerland. This money is calculated for one person, but for me (as is the case with other African students), this stipend has to cover for my basic living expenses in Switzerland plus family needs in Cameroon. For instance with a scholarship of 1800, I had to pay my rents which was 990, my health insurance was 86 and increased later to 180.60 when I turned 30 years old, my monthly bus pass was 70, an average of 50 for monthly telephone credit, 100 on average for feeding (all figures in Swiss francs) including paying school fees for family, friends, and neighbours in Cameroon, and my mum's health care as a cancer patient. With all these, I am forced to make certain choices e.g. sacrificing my own comfort of living in a nice little individual room to a cheaper place. But even with this, I still count myself very fortunate to have such privilege to study on scholarship. It means that I am not under any pressure to repay any money that was borrowed to finance my studies abroad.

To round up this note on positionality, I would say that the main issue here is neither about objectivity or subjectivity nor about insider/outsider. What is important is how my own experiences help me to better understand my informants and to analyse my data in the most accurate form. In any case, a researcher has to negotiate his/her presence on the field. The epistemological question related to

positionality and reflexivity as discussed here is how this negotiation influence the information collected. In my case, by being a participant in what I study, my experience has been an added impetus in generating rich ethnographic data which has allowed me to provide (in the words of Geertz, 1973: 1-33) ‘thick’ descriptive accounts of the migration and remittance practices of Cameroonian migrants.

Methodological framework: qualitative method— pluri-local ethnography

This research method which I have called pluri-local ethnography is inspired by Monsutti, (2005c: 44) thesis on plural location, what he called *plurilocalisée*. Pluri-local ethnography as used in this study is slightly different from Marcus (1995) thesis on multi-sited ethnography because this study does not involve *following*⁴⁴, that is to say following people(migrants), things, stories, to name a few. Rather, it is primarily concerned with understanding the migration and remittance patterns and narratives of Cameroonian migrants in different locations (Sweden and Switzerland plus migrants’ families in Cameroon).

Unlike many other anthropological studies on migration and remittances which focus on migrants from a particular ethnic group, this study includes Cameroonians from different regions of Cameroon. I met these informants at different Cameroonian gatherings. However, the five main informants come from the Grassfield (that is North West and Western regions) as well as the South West regions of Cameroon. Given that I had to interview migrants’ families in Cameroon, I was concern about geographical feasibility and the language familiarity and this was what prompted

⁴⁴ Marcus, (1995: 96) argues that, the intricacy of many ethnographic studies call for multiple sites of observation. He explains that multi-sited ethnography is essential “to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time and space”. In this approach, it is possible to follow people, including things, metaphors, stories, biography, and conflicts across space and the changes over time (1995: 105-110). In this case, I do not follow and study Cameroonian migrants from one country to another, but rather understand their migration and remittances patterns in the countries where they live which are Switzerland and Sweden and their families in Cameroon.

my decision to focus on selecting migrants from these regions. In addition, I find these migrants' narratives loaded with interesting information that touches on the key themes of my research.

Studying the moral economy of Cameroonian migration and remittances from a gender and family perspective means that I have to investigate, describe, and analyse the patterns of interactions, roles, decisions, processes, effects, ceremonies, rituals, to name a few. To understand how these processes work, time was needed and this explains why an ethnographic method of enquiry remains the best methodological approach.

This qualitative study allows me to capture the meanings and multiple realities of transnational migrants' remittances. Cameroonian migrants are spread across a variety of sites and Monsutti, (2005b: 169) refers to such sites as migratory circuits. In studying migrants in these circuits, questions go beyond why people migrate (motivations) to how people migrate (strategies). Given that Cameroonian migrants are located in these different circuits, a pluri-local approach was imperative.

Life histories

Life-history is a qualitative data generation tool that allows the researcher to explore a person's micro-historical (individual) experiences within a macro-historical framework. Information revealed during life-history interviewing allows the researcher to understand an individual's current attitude and behaviours and how they may have been influenced by initial decisions made at another time and in another place. The main strength in a life-history method is that it helps the interviewer to avoid "yes or no" questions, but rather to get the subject to "tell the story of his or her life", in his/her own words⁴⁵. This is because stories connect us to our roots; thus life-history research methodology enables the researcher to gather information on the subjective essence of a person's entire life (Atkinson, 2002: 121-123).

⁴⁵ <http://atlasti.com/life-history-research/> (accessed 12.04.2016)

Given that Cameroonians have a long history of migration (initially through internal migration and later transnational migration), the life-history approach was used to understand the continuity and/or disjuncture in Cameroonian migration and remittance patterns that have taken place over time. Collecting life-history interviews with Cameroonian migrants in Sweden, Switzerland and their families in Cameroon was done to understand and explain the mobility patterns of these migrants.

In collecting these histories, I asked migrants to explain about their family background and later about their migratory and remittance trajectories. By family background, I asked migrants about parents' occupation, number of siblings and their occupation including their physical location and marital statuses, relationship with the nuclear and extended family, the migrant's life before s/he migrated, how s/he migrated, decision making, financing, to cite a few. In the course of telling me their narratives, I often probed further for historical aspects of parental migration (if any).

In Cameroon, the life-history approach allowed me to ask families to narrate their relationship with their migrants abroad in terms of communication and remittance flows from the time s/he left Cameroon. These stories were filled with familial gratification for what their son, daughter or sibling was doing for the family. In some cases, families also did express disappointments in that their migrant is not living up to the expectations that were entrusted in him or her.

Using life-history was a strategy to give the interviewee the opportunity to fully narrate his/her trajectories in his or her own voice. This was especially useful in relation to the sending of remittances which is a practice that is full of cultural, economic, and moral dispositions. As Atkinson, noted, we need life-histories in order to understand other persons' experience in life or their relations to others. To do so, we need to let their voices be heard, to let them speak for and about themselves. He added that "if we want to get the unique perspective of an individual, there is no better way to get this than in that person's own voice... It is, after all, this subjective perspective that tells us what we are looking for in all research efforts. This is what constitutes the individual's reality of his or her world" (2002: 124). For me, the life-history method allowed me to explore

how the themes of continuity (migration dynamics over time), purpose, commitment, and meaning were expressed in the migration and remittance narratives of the migrants interviewed for this study.

Applied methods in research locations: Sweden and Switzerland

This research is based on what Geertz, (1973: ix) called case histories also known as case studies. As de Vaus, (2001: 220) noted, a case is an ‘object’, it is the unit of analysis which we collect information for. These units can be individuals, a family, a household, places, organizations. The “cases” in this study are individual Cameroonian migrants and their families in Cameroon. In addition, it has been argued that case studies are preferred when “how” and “why” questions are posed and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within real life context (Yin, 2003: 1) e.g. transnational migration and remittances. Since this study is about how gender and family dynamics affect migrants’ remittances, focusing on particular cases become even more important. Besides, Flick, (2009: 134) confirms that by focusing on a particular case study, much information can be generated from the respondents about the particular phenomenon under study. Therefore by choosing to focus on gender, moral, and family dynamics in Cameroonian migrants’ remittances flow, I seek to get deeper meanings of these flows beyond their economic incentives.

In Sweden, I carried out research with 19 Cameroonian migrants. Out of these, 8 were in-depth formal interviews and 11 informal interviews/discussions. Beside these, I did carry out participant observation (what Achieng, 2011 call communicative observation)⁴⁶. In my observations, I paid attention to migrants’ jokes about life in Europe but also about their struggles and discontentments with the

⁴⁶The method of participant observation that I used in this study is in contrast with conventional participant observation method in anthropology where an ethnographer leaves his/her community to go and stay and observe a community that is not one’s own (Achieng, 2011). Given that I am already a participant in, (so to say) my own realities, the method of participant observation used in this study is communicative observation as put forward by Achieng, (2011: 143).

Cameroonian state as a whole. So often, migrants lament about the state of crises in Cameroon, expressing deep feelings for those young Cameroonians who are trapped and cannot find a way out from a country that offers no hope for the future. It is the conditions under which people find themselves back home that make them to adopt certain practices and wants to leave at all cost. For those who cannot make it further afield to Euro-America or Asia, migration to other countries within the CEMAC region notably Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and other countries in Southern Africa becomes an option.

Figures from IOM show that 311 migrants from Cameroon live in Sweden⁴⁷. Out of the 8 migrants that were formally interviewed, there were 5 women and 3 men. These migrants all came from the Grassfield and South West regions of Cameroon. I had worked with 5 of these migrants from 2009- 2011. 5 out the 8 interviewees were undocumented. The interviews lasted between 50-75 minutes. The other 11 informal interviews were mostly lengthy discussions with migrants that included different information relating to the migrants' trajectories, communication and relations with families back home, and remittance patterns. Sometimes these discussions started off as political debates in Cameroon, or any recent development in Cameroon, or in a football match where the Cameroon national team was involved or a European league which had a Cameroonian as one of its players. For example, when migrants talked about the bad performance of Cameroon football team (the Indomitable Lions), it was always related to corruption, nepotism and tribalism, and then to condemning the present regime of President Paul Biya. The Anglophone migrants in particular were even more disgruntled. To some of these migrants, it is the political and socio-economic corruption of Cameroon that is responsible for increasing Cameroonian migration. As one migrant states it:

“It is Biya (the president of Cameroon) who has spoiled this country that is why someone will just decide that rather to remain in

⁴⁷ <http://www.iom.int/world-migration> (accessed 08.07.2015). These figures do not include undocumented migrants. If we take those residing in other regions in Sweden, it might double the official IOM figures.

Cameroon, it is better to struggle and leave. Even if it is to go by boat, or by any means; one just have to leave to go and look/search for *It*⁴⁸.

The interviewees in Sweden were made up of both documented and undocumented migrants, Francophones and Anglophones, students and non-students. While studying for my master degree in Sweden (2009-2011), I was an officially registered member of Cameroonian Grassfielders association (CamGrass) and a member of Cameroonians in Skåne (SkåneCam) although not officially registered in the latter. CamGrass had about 20 members and the number may go up to more than a hundred when there was a party. SkåneCam had about 25 members and this number could go up to hundreds when there was a party. Members of both CamGrass and SkåneCam took turns to host meetings which took place once a month on different dates, usually over the weekend. After formal matters of a meeting session had been discussed, it was time for “item-11”⁴⁹ which also included drinking and the drinks were provided by the host of that meeting session. For CamGrass, all members had to pay the sum of 50SEK (fifty Swedish Kroners which is approximately 5 Euros depending on the exchange rates) for food. This money was paid and handed to the host of the next meeting session who will then use the money to prepare food and buy drinks. It was during and after item-11 that members got to mingle and chatted and it was at these occasions that I met all my informants for research in Sweden.

I went back to Sweden in the summer of 2015. During the weeks that I was there, one of my friend was the host of a njangi (tontine). One of the rules in this njangi is that members need to pay in their money before 8pm. This means that a member can be late but his/her money should be present before his/her arrival; in such cases the njangi money is sent through a friend. Late coming is punished with a fine. The sum contributed for this njangi is 3000SEK per

⁴⁸ Original quote in Pidgin English: Na Biya don spoil we dis kontri. Na why that wey someman go decide say than say make e remain for Cameroon, better make e struggle comot. Even na for take boat, anyhow, man just need for comot go find-am.

⁴⁹ Item-11 is an Anglophone slang for eating time during a gathering.

member per month. The host for each month prepares food and buys drinks. After the money has been collected, the president would say a few words and pass-on the money to the other members. Each person says a few words and passes it on. During this njangi which I attended, the president said: “our sister Pamella, we pray that anything or any project which you want to do with this money should go on well”. Then he passed it on to another member who said: “whether it is school fees, or to buy a piece of land, may this money multiply. If you invest this money to buy a piece of land, it shall multiply to many”. The money went round and got to my turn and I said “may this money be fruitful in any endeavour that it is intended for”. There was a mother who was visiting her daughter in Sweden. She too was amongst us and the money was passed over to her. She only touched it (as a way of blessing) and handed over the envelope to the president who then handed it over to the host who was leaving for Cameroon the following week.

As for Switzerland, the Cameroonian population is larger than in Sweden. Figures from the Swiss federal bureau of statistics shows that the male Cameroonian population between the ages of 20-80+ resident in Switzerland between the years 1995-2010 stood at 1407 while that for women within the same age range was 2361 making it a total of 3768. During an interview in March 2014 with the Cameroon ambassador to Switzerland, he explained that the total population of officially registered Cameroonians in Switzerland is about 4000. “I mean officially registered”, he insisted. “This does not include *les sans papiers* (those without papers) and others which the embassy does not have any information about”, he added. Out of these figures, about 3000 are women.

My research was mainly in the French speaking part of Switzerland. This was because of its proximity to Geneva where I live. It is said that this area harbours a majority of the Cameroonian population in Switzerland; most of whom are Francophones. However, I also met Cameroonian migrants from other cantons in Switzerland during Cameroonian gatherings. The number of migrants interviewed in Switzerland was 14 in total. Out of this, I conducted 5 formal in-depth interviews and 9 informal interviews. In the formal interviews, there were 3 women and 2 men. And in the

informal interviews, there were 6 men and 3 women in addition to many other discussions with Cameroonians who were not my informants per se but whose conversations I found interesting. The length of stay, the migrants' life history, region of origin in Cameroon was the main criteria in selecting the informants with whom I conducted formal interviews in Switzerland. Unlike in Sweden, the Cameroonian population in Switzerland is mostly Francophones.

The formal interviews were conducted in English and pidgin English and lasted for between 60-75 minutes while the informal interviews/discussions were a mixture of French, English, or pidgin English depending with whom I was having the conversation. Out of the 5 formal interviews, 4 took place at my home while one of the interviewees suggested that I come to her house which I did. In all, the interviewees in Switzerland were made up of students and non-students, documented and undocumented migrants, migrants who came as students, completed their studies and now work in some of the international organisations as well as in the Swiss private sector. Interviewees were also made up of married as well as single migrants, including those with children and those without.

I met my informants through friends of friends, and also in Cameroonian gatherings, in bars and restaurants, as well as in some Cameroonian associations of which I have membership notably Geneva Family and GREFCAM-Suisse (Groupe de Reflexion des Femmes Camerounaises) de Suisse. I was introduced to these associations through friends and friends of friends.

During my first day of meeting with Geneva Family and after I had been introduced, I was sitting on a sofa in between Tara and Christopher. As we were eating, Christopher turned to me and asked, "I hear you are a student so what are you studying"? "Anthropology of Development", I replied. "Anthropology? Do people still study these kinds of subjects? You mean you go to places and dig up old remnants and analyse them"? "No", I responded. "I didn't say Archaeology, I said Anthropology". "Ah, ok so what is that, I mean what do you study there", he asked? "I am researching on transnational Cameroonian migration and remittances", I said. "I hope you are not going to use us as the rabbits of your study", he joked. Before I responded, Tara interrupted and said, "even if she

used us as rabbits what is wrong with that? Are we not migrants, don't we send money back home? Even Christy herself sitting here, doesn't she also send money, or Christy is it a lie?" he asked, while looking at me. I smiled and said "I do send". Then he turned to Christopher and said, "What is wrong with studying what is real, I mean the things we do". "No, Tara, I was only joking", Christopher insisted. He added that "you know scientists when they want to carry out their experiments, they use rabbits, and so when Roger introduced Christy as a doctorate student I was thinking in that line. So it has nothing to do with whether we send money or not. In short Christy if you want, you can even interview me". Christopher started telling me the conflicts he had with his brother on money issues concerning his on-going construction work in Cameroon. During my one year at Geneva family, I interacted with many people and it was here that I met some of my informants.

Unlike Geneva Family, GREFCam is more formalised with laid down rules guiding the association including the amount to be contributed in the case of death of a member or a member's spouse or one of the first three children of a member. Meeting begins at 2pm and anyone coming late who had not called the president to inform her pays a late coming fee of 2CHF. When formal issues have been discussed, what follows is divers (other matters in English). At this point, members usually share different stories e.g. about their children if they passed an exam, or got a job, Cameroon politics and the president Biya regime, Swiss politics, the image of Cameroonians in particular Cameroonian girls in Switzerland, the hurdles of getting the legal papers to stay in Switzerland, remittance patterns and relationships with families in Cameroon, to cite a few. In one of these occasions, after people had shared their different stories, Maria said she has something she will like to share. She got up and read a letter that had been sent to her by the Swiss immigration authorities informing her to return her Swiss passport because according to the authorities, she had lied about her status when applying for her naturalisation facilitée⁵⁰. According to what was written in the letter,

⁵⁰ For an immigrant to be qualified for naturalisation facilitée or (facilitated naturalization in English) under the Swiss law, it is stated that s/he "must have live in a stable marriage with your spouse for at least three years, have lived in

Maria lied that her adopted son was still living with her at the time of her application for naturalization; whereas they, the Swiss migration authorities have found out that Jean (her adopted son) had escaped from home and was under the custody of another person. Maria shed tears as she finished reading the letter and Grace, one of the members assured Maria that it will be ok. She asked Maria to hire a lawyer but to also come and see her. Before the official closing of the meeting, the president reminded members that “whatever we discussed remain amongst us GREFCam members, all that ‘kongossa’ (Cameroonian slang for gossip) amongst Cameroonians should not be brought into this meeting. Everything we say or do, remains internal, no gossip” she insisted.

Maria was sitting a few seats from me; I went up to her and wiped her tears. After the meeting when the other members left, me, Grace, Charlotte, and Maria sat on the table and ate chips as we discussed. “Is it the child of that your elder sister”, Charlotte asked? (It appears Charlotte and Grace knows Maria’s family very well) and Maria said yes, so they started to discuss the issue. I kept quiet and listened, while Grace assured Maria not to worry— “tant que l’enfant de Dieu, tu vas réussir” (meaning as a child of God you will succeed). When Charlotte got into the kitchen to bring out more drinks, Maria turned to me and said, “People are really ungrateful”. I profited from her statement and asked her, “So what is really the problem? Do you have a problem with this child or with your sister”? “No”, she replied. “It is a very long story, but I will just explain to you briefly the entire situation”, and she began:

Switzerland for five years all in all, the last twelve months of which must be without interruption. If you lived abroad, you must have lived in a stable marriage for at least six years and must have close connections with Switzerland. Regardless of where you live, you must be integrated in Swiss way of life at least by analogy, comply with the Swiss rule of law, and must not endanger Switzerland’s internal or external security. Note: the Swiss spouse must have been of Swiss citizenship before marriage”. Federal office of migration, State Secretariat for migration SEM, available online at:

https:
//www.bfm.admin.ch/content/bfm/en/home/themen/buergerrecht/faq.0006.html#a_0006 (accessed 09.07.2015)

You know this idea that you come here and you want to help your family, only for it to back-fire on you. I have been living here for more than 15 years and I got my passport more than 5 years ago. My husband is Swiss. Since we got married, we don't have any child so I decided that I will help my sister. Instead of sending money all the time, I can bring over one of her children who will come here and go to school, get a job and will continue to help his mum and other family members. I was doing this with my one heart, not knowing that it will turn against me like this. My sister's son Jean came here at the age of 8, I adopted him as my son. He was living with me and by the age of 15, he started to be very stubborn, when I talk to him he does not listen. He just disrespects me. I know that he was corrupted by the mum of the other Cameroonians in the quartier where we used to live. In that neighbourhood, there were three other Cameroonian ladies, some of them have been in Switzerland long before me but they have not had their papers. So they were jealous of me. They started gossiping about me, one of them even met my husband once on the road and told my husband bad things about me. She told my husband that I used to date so many men in Cameroon. Luckily that this white people are not like we blacks. So my husband told me all what she said but he didn't react in any bad way. He continued to love me.

Jean was a friend to the son of one of these Cameroonian ladies so he used to go and visit his friend and sometimes spent a night at their house. This lady began to instil bad ideas into Jean, and Jean's behaviour became unbearable. Once I got so annoyed and hit him and he left the house and was staying with this lady for two weeks. I suppose this was the situation which the woman thought she could use against me because I had stopped talking to her. She even told Jean that now that he has his passport, he can leave me and do whatever he wants. I know these because of the way Jean used to respond to me when I shouted at him. So I decided that I will take him back to Cameroon. I told him we were going home for Christmas to visit. When we got home, I explained to my sister all what her son has become and said I can't stay with him anymore. I left him there and came back. But because he had already gotten his passport, his mum paid his flight a year later and he came back to

Switzerland and started staying with that woman. I think that the lady and Jean connived, wrote a letter to the migration office against me. It is based on the letter they wrote that the Swiss found me not worthy of their passport, according to what they say. They say I am not honest, and so not eligible to keep their passport. And this is why they sent me this letter... people are wicked, Maria concluded.

“It is jealousy”, Charlotte added. “These are the kind of people who don’t like to see others progress. But don’t worry, God is with you, you haven’t done anything bad, you have a clean heart and the lord will fight your battle. They will reap what they have sown”, she continued. Grace added that, “that is why you see I took all the necessary legal steps when I was adopting one of my nieces. I didn’t think that, oh it is family, oh my sister’s child is my child, no! People come here and they changed, they become something else, and you never know tomorrow. But like I said Maria, don’t worry, it is not a big issue. The Swiss and their passport, it is a different thing. It shall be well”, she assured Maria. Charlotte added that, “that is why you see me I don’t mingle with so many Cameroonians, I chose my friends carefully, because there are people here who are just out to bring others down. They like to gossip, they hear from A and go and talk to B”. Grace interrupted by saying that, “and it is not the same thing because when they do those their ‘kongossa’ (meaning to gossip) they say things that you didn’t even say. En tout cas, on doit changer, les Africaines ». Charlotte interrupted and said, « pas les Africaines, c’est les Camerounaise ». Grace confirmed, and added that, « c’est la jalousie qui va nous tuer. C’est pourquoi on ne peut pas développer”. At this point, the discussion switched to a comparison of development in Africa and Asia. It was 7pm, Maria’s phone rang, it was her husband, and he came to pick her up. Maria asked me if I want them to give me a ride, I said yes. So we said good bye and stepped out.

At GREFCam, I met, interacted and still interacts with the members, some of whom have been living in Switzerland for more than 25 years. Their narratives in many of our informal conversations enriched my ethnographic data. In Switzerland, I also interviewed one official who works at the Swiss Federal Bureau of Migration. I met him during a Cameroonian diaspora forum for investment

dubbed DAVOC (Draw a Vision of Cameroon) that was organized in Geneva from the 11-12th of October 2012. The theme for that year's forum was *"Pour une promesse aux générations futures"*. In the program, there was a session on the *Propos Liminaire de l'Office Des Migrations*. Mr. Prosper from the Swiss office of migration gave a talk on the subject: *"Enjeux d'une intégration réussie des communautés migrantes pour la Suisse pays d'accueil et pour les pays d'origine"*. At the end of his talk, I walked up to him, introduced myself and we exchanged contact details. A few weeks later, Mr. Prosper was coming to Geneva for a meeting so he accepted that we could meet. I asked him questions relating to integration of immigrants in Switzerland. Our discussion was centred mainly on the theme of legality and at the end of our 45 minutes interview, he suggested that I can contact the OCP (Office Cantonal des Populations) of Geneva if I needed further information. I didn't find this necessary since I am not dealing with legality per se, nor family unification so I didn't pursue this further. Nonetheless from our discussion, I got a sense of the complexities of visa and permit renewals for foreigners, especially Africans. This background information was important given that legality affects immigrants' employment and by implication remittances flow as documented in an earlier study (see Atekmangoh, 2011, 2013).

I also did carry out participant observation at two money transfer agencies, notably Money&Com and Ria. I wanted to simply observe the direction of most flows of remittances judging from the different immigrant nationalities. From my observation at these two agencies, Philippina migrants were the majority, followed by immigrants from Latin America, and then Africans. In the case of Money&Com, they have direct partnerships with some banks in the Philippines. When sending money, each sender has to indicate his/her relationship to the receiver. On the senders' receipt, (see appendix 4) there is a section known as *lien de parenté* where the sender writes his/her relationship status with the receiver. When I enquired from the cashier why they ask for customers' *lien de parenté*, I was told that it was just for records; to probably check senders' familial or social

relationship with the receivers in their home countries⁵¹. Some other main information which appears on the sender's receipt include: the name and address of the sender, country of nationality, passport or ID card number and telephone number, name and address of the receiver, telephone number, receiving agency, pin code, amount sent and amount to be received, charges, exchange rate, to name a few.

The sender's receipt does not have any information on the sex of the sender therefore this makes it difficult to get statistics on the number of women as compared to men who remit. In addition, there is also a limit as to the amount of money a client can send at once. Depending on the salary of the client, s/he will need to show proof that the money s/he is sending has been gotten through genuine work, not through illegal means such as selling drugs. This happens when the amount to be sent at once is from 3000CHF. As indicated on the sender's receipt, clients need to declare that the money they are sending was not from any illegal activity.

There is also a limit regarding the amount of money one can send within a month depending on the income status of the sender as testified by his/her salary slip. Once I went to send money and I was told that I have exceeded my monthly sending amount which is a maximum of 3000CHF. It happened that, in that month I helped some friends who were undocumented to send money to their families. I noticed that even some money transfer agencies can help undocumented migrants send money depending on the cashier. I found out about this because I met one lady from one of the African countries one day in an African shop. She was advertising a new money transfer agency that has just been opened. As she approached me, she gave me the flyer and said, "It is quite cheap to send money with us. And now we are doing promotion so it is even cheaper. And if you don't have papers, we can arrange with one of our staff who can send it for you", she said. I found this quite interesting, in the way the formal and the informal economy of flows interact and how migrants tend to help each other.

⁵¹ A friend told me that Money&Com often asked for sender's *lien de parenté* because if they see that one is sending huge amounts of money to someone who is not a family relative, they might suspect that you are into illegal business (e.g. sale of drugs).

Research in Cameroon

After research in Sweden and Switzerland, I was interested to carry out fieldwork with the families of my informants in Cameroon as well as other interlocutors, some of which included: migration brokers, research in the local communities and some ministries, aspiring migrants, young and old, educated and non-educated. I sought to understand the general perception and how the processes of migration take place as well as the stakeholders involved in the context of departure —Cameroon. I also wanted to explore how migration successes and failures are understood and described in the context of departure by non-migrants, the wider families, and communities. Other questions that interested me was how migration patterns have evolved over time in the context of departure as well as how power relations, jealousy, and competition manifest in decisions regarding migration and remittances within family circles in Cameroon.

I also wanted to understand how families define who is a successful mbengis/bushfaller and who is not, as well as who is a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mbengis/bushfaller. I find this very notion of qualifying mbengis into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ as well as successful and not successful to be very informative. I wanted also to further investigate some of the main themes that emerged during fieldwork in Sweden and Switzerland which included:

1. Economic crises and increasing transnational migration
2. Decisions, migration, remittances, and conflicts
3. Migration brokerage

Fieldwork

Fieldwork lasted from December 2014– March 2015. It was carried out in the SouthWest (Buea, Limbe, Kumba), NorthWest (in Bamenda), Littoral (in Douala), and Centre (Yaoundé) regions. These are the towns where the families of my informants live. December was chosen because this is the time where many migrants come home for Christmas. Three of my informants and many other friends were

also in Cameroon during this period. Two were returning home for good and the other informant for visit, but mainly because her contract with one of the international organisations ended. During my stay in Cameroon, I visited migration agencies and had interviews with individual migration brokers who have no offices. I also visited the families of my informants. Some of them had sent parcels to be delivered to their families and this served as the initial point of contact. For the other informants who were already in Cameroon, I visited them in their houses and spent between a night and two nights. It was during my stay at these homes that I had the opportunity to talk to their parents, friends, and other relatives who came to visit within the days that I was staying over.

In the evening, we talked about life in Europe and in Switzerland, the good times and the hard times. It was in these discussions that some of the family members realised just how difficult it has been for some of these migrants. Nonetheless, these difficult experiences and the adverse condition of living and working as an undocumented migrant in Switzerland didn't seem to discourage aspiring migrants. In fact, the cousin of one of my informants said "even if it is difficult there, it can never be as bad as it is in Cameroon. For example, see, you (pointing to her cousin Cynthia) were staying there without papers for more than five years but look at what you still manage to do. You were still sending us money and paying for school fees, and even bought a car for daddy, I mean the taxi he is now using. This means that even if it is bad, it is still far better than Cameroon. We know that it is not easy over there, but at least when you work hard, you can see the result, you can see the money, but here, you can work very hard and yet your life will remain the same. Your life will not change..."

My friend and informant turned and said to me, "Chris I beg tell them how difficult things are in Europe". So I tried explaining to this cousin of my informant that the life her sister was living was not easy, so she shouldn't think that, because she was sending money to them, it means she was well-off. She nodded and said she understood but that "...at the end of the day, bush is bush and it is still better off". I spoke to the parents, siblings, and friends of these informants who

have ‘returned home for good’⁵² and they were all disappointed that these migrants did so. The mum of one of them seemed ok with the decision but she also felt that she was not lucky enough to have a daughter who could remain in Switzerland. She told me “my daughter has tried, let her come and rest. If it is the will of God that she will go back to Europe, she will still go back... She will get a job and she can still go to Europe and America ...it is my own bad luck” (with a saddened voice).

Besides research with migrants’ families, I also conducted research on bushfalling in the neighbourhoods and paid attention to conversations in public buses and car parks on Cameroonian transnational migration. In Buea which is a town in Southwest Cameroon (where I lived), I asked people what they understand by bushfalling. There were different answers depending on the level of education of the person responding. Sometimes I asked this question spontaneously each time the topic of bushfalling came up whether it was in a car, on the street, in a university campus, in the neighbourhood, over dinner/lunch with friends. Beside these, I posed this question as one of the questions I asked to families and friends of migrants. I also did ask them whether they thought their friend, sibling, or child was a bushfaller and why. The responses I got were fascinating, and some of the responses are quoted in chapter 5 under the section on definition of bushfalling, bushfallers. Then I travelled to Yaoundé where I stayed for 10 days and during this time, I visited the Ministry of Finance and the Institut National de Statistiques to get updated statistics of remittance flows to Cameroon but I was told they were not available.

Cyber cafes

I also had discussions with two cyber cafe owners in Yaoundé. I went to these two cyber cafes regularly because there was no internet in the house where I was staying. In one of the cyber cafes, there was

⁵² I write this in single quotation marks because although these informants claim they were returning home for good after staying in Switzerland for so many years undocumented, they had plans to fall bush to other countries in the near future.

a notice posted with various dating sites for black girls looking for white men. Sitting beside me was a young girl, she was 28 years old and had a son who was 3 years according to her discussion with her internet boyfriend. As their discussion went on, the guy asked her what her likes and dislikes were, and many other questions. They Skype for about an hour and her time expired given that she had bought a one hour ticket. At the end of her discussion, I greeted her and asked her name, “Mireille” she said. “I am Christine” I responded. I asked her if this was her first time here or if she visited the cyber café often. She replied that she came almost on a daily basis unless when she does not have money to buy a ticket (an hour ticket at these cyber cafes cost 300FCFA). She is not going to sit at home and waste her time with all these good-for-nothing Cameroonian boys, she told me. “I want to leave this country by all means”, she said. “I have to secure my son’s future and to better my life as well” she added. And our discussion went on for about 20 minutes before she left.

I then continue the discussion with the owner of the cyber café. I asked him how often girls visited his place, he said “very often and they mainly came to chat and Skype. Some are not aware of many of the dating sites that do exist, that is why you see we have it pasted here. We help some of them to open an email account for those without one and also sign them up to some of these sites. I mean for the ones that are free, others you have to pay, so we can’t afford”, he said. “Do you want to sign up”? he asked. “No, I am just interested because it is useful for me to understand how this work”. I ended up asking him many questions and took down notes as we discussed and our discussion lasted between 30-35mins. During my time at the cyber cafés, I didn’t see any guy who came to look for online dating. I was told that online dating is mostly for girls. One cyber café owner told me that “no woman in Europe will be interested in bringing over a man she met online. Guys who go online are interested in scamming not dating”. It seems cybermigration is a strategy mostly used by young girls. The studies of Nitcheu, (1999), Johnson-Hanks, (2007), and Mankou, (2011) confirm this.

Money transfer agencies

I also did research in money transfer agencies, notably Express Union and Money Exchange. These two agencies were chosen because they have cheaper money transfer charges compared to other agencies like Western Union and this has made them popular with many migrants. Express Union is usually over crowded because it also transfers money locally to other towns and cities in Cameroon. At Express Union, when the receiver cannot read and write, there is someone always at the entrance that will ask the information that is needed on the receiver's form and filled it out. I planned my research in these agencies on the days I was also going to receive and send money. At Express Union, the information required for the international receiver's forms are different from national receiver's forms (that is the forms are different for money that was sent from abroad and money that was transferred within Cameroon). As I sat waiting for my turn to be called up to come and receive my money, one woman walked in. I later realized that she couldn't read nor write. Her son has sent her money from Switzerland. The money was sent through one of the siblings to take and give to the mum. However, the mum came with the daughter to receive the money. As they walked in, they told the receptionist that they would like to receive money that was sent from Switzerland. The receptionist gave them the form to fill out but there was a section in the form that she didn't quite understand and she asked for help from the receptionist who directed her accordingly. When my name was called up, I got my money but didn't leave. I just stayed to observe the proceedings. As the daughter of the woman collected the money, she counted it and handed it over to the mum saying: "take and count for yourself before you start accusing people left and right..." She took it, and didn't count it. She immediately kept it inside her handbag as they walked out of the agency.

At Money Exchange, there are more international than local transactions. So they seem to be more acquainted to having educated and non-educated customers who come to receive money from abroad. It was after Christmas so work was slow. One of the staff told me "after December, we are not too busy. Our peak periods are

September and from November to December before Christmas”. At Money Exchange all those working at the counter are women, while at Express Union, they are more women than men working at the counter. But at the payment desk, it was a woman. In about 6 Express Unions I visited while in Cameroon even before I left Cameroon in 2009, all the cashiers are women and it is still the same till today. The men are more into the administrative work.

Virtual ethnography

Beside the various physical data generation methods discussed above, I paid attention to Facebook discussions on the theme of migration. I was attentive to the type of photos posted on Facebook and the comments such photos inspired from both family and friends of bushfallers residing in either Cameroon or abroad. Moreover, one of my main informants Celestine does not reside in Switzerland. So with him, (as in the case with my informants in Sweden), we Skyped, talked on WhatsApp all the time. This virtual ethnographic approach according to Constable (2003) “allows for the articulation of pre-existing group identities, while it simultaneously creates opportunities for the breakdown, violation or calling into question of more narrowly conceived boundaries of local groups, or local communities”. Constable argues that the internet provides phenomenal opportunities, but also challenges for ethnographic research. These virtual communities overlap and intertwine with those that are face-to-face, supposedly more real (pg.32-33).

One thing which I found interesting is the increase in cyber Cameroonian migration which has begun to receive scholarly attention. As Nitcheu, (1999) and Johnson-Hanks (2007) demonstrate in their studies, the internet is increasingly becoming an exit strategy for Cameroonian women, in particular girls from Francophone Cameroon notably Douala and Yaoundé to migrate through marriage to their internet white husbands. To Mankou, (2011) this cybermigration is a process that involves an individual, that is, a woman positioned in front of her computer screen with one main goal which is to look for white guy, get married and leave Cameroon to better her life and her family. He writes that:

« ... La femme migrante africaine d'aujourd'hui cherche à façonner son propre destin. En émigrant, notamment vers les pays industrialisés, elle veut assurer la survie de sa famille restée au pays. L'une des cyberstratégies les plus usuelles des femmes camerounaises, rappelons-le, est de parcourir la Toile pour « chercher un conjoint blanc », se marier et quitter le pays. Il s'agit d'afficher des annonces matrimoniales, qui comprennent une photographie et un court message du genre : « jeune femme camerounaise sérieuse, cherche européen âge indifférent pour vie à deux et mariage. Annonce sérieuse. Aventurier, pervers s'abstenir ». Cette cyberstratégie apparaît comme une tentative de contournement de la pauvreté à l'instar des réseaux sociaux constitués, telles les tontines » (2011: 4-5).

Although none out of my five main informants travelled through cyber migration, it is a practice which is very popular amongst young female in especially Yaoundé and Douala. 3 sisters of some of my informants are married to whites, two French and one Swiss and they met on dating websites. Thus their migration to Switzerland was through cyber migration. As a matter of fact, cybermigration is so common in Francophone Cameroon that in May 2013, the Swiss Radio and Television Network (RTS) produced a documentary on Cameroonian cybermigration entitled “chercher un blanc à marier”⁵³ (meaning “looking for a white to marry”). So I visited a number of dating websites in particular afrointroduction.com, edarling.ch, be2.com to understand the logic of these practices. I observed the type of photos which people posted, which were usually nice photos that capture the physical appearance of the person. Sometimes there were profiles without any picture and I discovered that such a profile did not seem to be very active. People described themselves and the type of person they want, including the type of relationship, the origin of the person they are interested in, age, height, to name a few. In all the 15 randomly selected profiles I visited, there was one profile description which caught my attention. This profile is a Swiss guy

⁵³ The documentary can be accessed via <http://www.rts.ch/emissions/temps-present/societe-moeurs/4827706-cherche-blanc-a-marier.html> (accessed 20.10.2015)

who is 38 years old. He is 1.70cm tall, blond hair, blue eyes, and works in the transportation sector. In his profile he wrote:

“Man, 38 years old, living in Switzerland looking for a girl age between 25-35 for a serious relationship. Calm, serious, and easy going. Does not smoke, drink in social gathering. Please note: the fact that I am from Switzerland does not mean I have money. If you are a girl from Africa and interested only in my money, please don’t contact me. Thanks”.

Following Constable (2003) argument, my virtual ethnographic data complements my face-to-face research, allowing me to conclude that migrants’ spaces of interaction are both physical and virtual. In addition, given the fact that Cameroonian migrants just as all migrants are not located in spatially bounded localities as argued by transnationalists, combining this technique of virtual to “real” (physical) ethnography, especially for the case of Facebook allows me to examine how migrants’ representations inform their realities and the meanings behind the photos uploaded.

Location and selection of key informants: snowballing and purposive sampling

The method used for recruiting informants for this study was snow balling and purposive sampling. Through snowballing, I came into contacts with many Cameroonians in Switzerland. Through friends and friends of friends, and through some Cameroonian associations such as the ones mentioned earlier, I met several people who were willing to take part in my study. However, not all the migrants who expressed interest were ‘suitable’ for my study. In some cases, there were some who shared with me their stories when we discussed informally. But declined when later I approached them to do a formal interview. Some hesitated, and later agreed. One informant told me “you know my situation here, you know my story, why do you still want to interview me? It’s a waste of time because you know it already”. In all cases, people shared more in-depth information when we discussed informally than during the formal

interviews. This was especially the case when I asked people if I could use a tape recorder. After all the contacts and informal discussions with many Cameroonian migrants, I made use of purposive sampling method to select those for the formal interviews. The informal discussions forms the basis for which I decided to follow up on a migrant's story.

In purposive sampling, cases are intentionally selected according to the needs of the study (Boeije, 2010: 36). Following this argument, other criteria that I took into consideration when selecting my key informants was years spent in the country where the migrant lives. Thus newly arrived migrants, (arrived within the last six months or less) were not the main focus of my study. However, this does not mean that I didn't speak to such people. When there was an opportunity, I did. This is because there could be relevant information relating to these migrants' journey e.g. in terms of how they came to Switzerland, through which means, and who were those involved in the migratory project, to cite a few. On the other hand, being newly arrived, they were not in the best position to get information on remittance patterns. The only exception in these cases was Cameroonian migrants migrating to Switzerland from countries other than Cameroon where they have lived for at least a year⁵⁴. Once I went out drinking with some friends and met this guy from Cameroon who just came in from the Netherlands. He came with a three months visa and after two months in the Netherlands, he saw that things were not moving so some friends advised him to come and try Switzerland. As we were drinking and chatting, I asked him: "so how are you enjoying Europe"? "Enjoy"? He repeated, and then continued that "the only time one can enjoy Europe is when you have doki (doki is a pidgin slang for documents). But right now, my head is ticking like a clock. You see, when you are leaving Cameroon, there is a difference between what you aspire to, and the realities on the ground... But anyhow, one will survive". This statement exemplifies how newly-arrived reflect on the way forward

⁵⁴ It has been argued that Cameroonians are long term migrants. It is estimated that about 43 percent of Cameroonian migrants have lived for more than 10 years in their country of destination, 16 percent have lived between a period of 5-10 years, and 26 percent for less than 5 years (OCDE, 2008b) in Evina (2009: 49).

if they are to remain in their countries of destination. As the guy noted, his head is ticking like a clock, and he is seeking ways on how he is going to stay beyond three months when his visa expires. Other Cameroonian guys who were sitting with us gave him different ideas on what to do including asking asylum in France.

I included migrants from different ages, background, ethnicity, documented, and undocumented migrants. The actual approach used was that I started off with many migrants and then gradually narrowed it down to five main informants. Amongst the five informants, there are three women and two men and one of them lives in Ukraine. These informants have lived in their respective countries for a minimum of 5 years. For the informant who lives in Ukraine, I have known him and his family for more than 10 years, even before he left Cameroon.

Out of these five main informants, three are married (two with children and one without). At the time of the interview, the informant from Ukraine had a child but was not married. When travelling to Cameroon, I asked informants if I could meet their families to do interviews with them and they accepted and gave me the contacts of those they considered their family and whom I should meet. In terms of family, and bearing in mind that African families are large, I did explain to my informants that I couldn't meet all their families including distant relatives, but I would like to meet those whom they consider their families, be it within the nuclear or extended family networks. For some of these informants, I met their parents, an aunt or uncle, or an elder sibling. As one of my informants explained "I am giving you my sister's number because this is the person I consider my mum. She is the mother of the house. But if you want, you can meet my parents as well. But she is the one you have to meet first..." Letting the interviewees carved out their family in terms of importance is also informative of their decisions regarding the choice of the remittance receivers. Below is a table of the demographic characteristics of my main informants.

Table 1: demographic characteristics of main informants

Demographic characteristics of key informants

Name of informant and how s/he migrated	Civil status	Married to	Age	Level of education & Occupation	Length of stay and country of residence at the time of research	Region of origin in Cameroon	Religion	Legal status
Cynthia (f) (through a broker)	Married with two children	Cameroonian	37	High school. Domestic work	8 years, Switzerland	South West	Pentecostal	undocumented
Matilda (f) (migrated as a student)	Married with two children	Cameroonian	36	Master degree Domestic work	6 years, Switzerland	South West	Pentecostal	Undocumented
Emelda (f) (migrated as a student through a broker)	Not married, no child		30	Master degree Accountant	5 years, Switzerland	South West region	Catholic	Documented
Celestine (m) (through a broker)	Not yet legally married but has a child	Engaged with a Ukrainian	30	Post-high school. Bricklayer, translator, driver	5 years, Ukraine	North West region	Protestant	Undocumented
Paul (m) (as an intern)	Paper marriage, no child	Paper marriage with a French lady	39	Master degree Administrative assistant	8 years, Switzerland	Western region	Protestant	Documented

Note: these characteristics are based on the information during the time of my research and might change over time. For example, by the time of interview, Celestine was undocumented but had taken steps towards legalising his stay. The above persons are my five main informants and I also interviewed members of their families in Cameroon. These informants' narratives are going to be referred to in the course of my analysis. Yet, it is important to mention that the data for this book is not based only on these 5 informants but also from other case studies which I have used to illustrate the different thematic areas covered in this study.

Interviews

Before the interviews, I explained to my informants that all information shared was just for research purposes and that their names will be changed; I ensured them confidentiality. In both the formal and informal interviews, I asked open-ended questions that allowed my interviewees to express themselves freely and to go deeper into the discussion. Follow-up questions enabled me to keep the discussion focused around the theme of migration and

remittances. As Mikkelsen, (2005: 169) argues, this semi-structured interview approach with open-ended questions “allow for flexible checks and guides”. Besides, respondents’ viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in open ended questions (Flick, 2006) and this allows for more discussion between the researcher and the interviewee.

Bernard, (1994: 210) maintains that informal discussions can be used to design interview guide. Accordingly, I designed my interview guide questions based on the informal conversations I have had with the interviewees. The interview guide contained questions on the demographic characteristics of the migrant, his/her family genealogies, the migrant’s migratory trajectory and remittance patterns. Some of the questions addressed issues relating to remittance frequency and estimates per month/year, on what occasions/situations does the migrant sent remittances, to whom, and why, *inter alia* other questions. The interview guide also contained questions that focused on migrants-family communication, that is, how the migrant position him/herself vis-à-vis her/his family and vice versa in terms of remittance flows.

Interviews were conducted in a very relaxed atmosphere. Sometimes interviewees spent the night at my place, we cooked, ate and then conducted the interview afterwards. At the end of each interview, I asked informants if they had anything to say which has not been asked. This was to also give the informant the lead to say whatever s/he feels relating to the theme of migration and to ask me questions. As we launched into the interview, I started off by taking down notes and then asked the interviewee if I could use a tape recorder. In all the formal interviews, I used a tape recorder but for one because the respondent refused. He preferred that I took down notes. He explained to me that he did not feel comfortable talking in front of a tape recorder, — “it makes you panic as if it is a visa interview” he joked. We laughed and I agreed that I will take down notes. In asking questions, I didn’t follow the chronological order of the questions as written in the interview guide. Depending on how the discussion unfolded, I probed in with other questions. Matching the information from the informal interviews to that of the formal interviews, I realised that so much little but important details came up during the informal conversations. I transcribed all interviews

conducted so in that way I was able to see/check for discrepancies (or lack of information) and to ask further questions when I talked again with my informants over the phone or when we met in gatherings or when we went out for drinks, or parties.

In sum, I would like to reiterate the fact that discussions, informal interviews, participant observation, and paying attention to all the various gossips, discontent as well as mistrust amongst migrants, and between migrants and their families are all what have constituted my empirical data in the countries where the migrants live. In addition, discussions with migrants' families, aspiring migrants, retired plantation workers, discussions in public places like car parks, in buses, in the neighbourhoods, interviews with migration brokers, as well as other interlocutors constitute my empirical data in the context of departure.

Research challenges

As a Cameroonian researching on Cameroonian migration and remittances have been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it has been beneficial in that I am familiar with my context and the social practices of my interlocutors. On the other hand, being an autochthone has been challenging in that sometimes I might have taken certain things for granted, or that I might have failed to 'see' certain realities. Yet, I have also tried to be a 'distant observer' in order to better understand and interpret my data. In taking this distance, I follow the proposition put forward by Achieng, (2011: 142) where she maintains that autochthone researchers would need to engage with different interlocutors across age, gender, ethnicity, and geographical regions. This is because these different interlocutors located in their respective geographical contexts would have different explanations to the same observable reality depending on their lived or shared experience. "Therefore the task of the autochthone researcher would be to make sense of these different explanations by trying to find out the hidden meaning in explanations derived from the different categories of people in the society". Accordingly, the pluri-local nature of my research involving men, women, the young and old has allowed me to remain objective. By

objectivity I mean to understand the situation as it reveals itself as noted by Achieng, (2011: 140-142).

Although I am a Cameroonian, and many Cameroonian migrants easily trusted me, there were perhaps some who doubted my intention for conducting this research. As one of my interviewees asked, “Why are you conducting this research? I hope that with your research this Swiss people will not make things even more difficult for Cameroonians...” Before I could respond, another Cameroonian that was sitting close by in the bar where we were drinking responded that: “is Christy the one to inform Swiss people all the bad acts that we Cameroonians are doing? You go to Paquis⁵⁵ and find all those Cameroonian prostitutes there, the names of Cameroonian ladies are coming up every day in the newspapers on how dubious they are, they come here and they don’t go to school but instead engage in all kinds of practices, so you think Swiss people are not aware”? When he finished, I added that “my research has nothing to do with the Swiss authorities, I am not working for them. I’m just a student and what I am doing is for my PhD thesis”. Yet, I must say this feeling of doubt on the impact of my research to the image of Cameroonians in Switzerland enabled me to see just how sensitive the subject of transnational migration and remittances can be.

Also, gaining the trust of undocumented migrants was not as straight forward as with documented Cameroonian migrants. CIREFI, (2009) statistics shows that the estimated number of undocumented Cameroonian migrants residing in the European Union countries increased from 1245 to 1314 persons in 2009 (Evina, 2009: 55)⁵⁶. Most undocumented migrants were willing to have informal discussions with me but not a formal interview. It was only after so many encounters in which trust and confidence have been established, that the undocumented migrants I know accepted to formally participate in my study.

⁵⁵ Paquis is a neighbourhood in Geneva.

⁵⁶ The number of undocumented Cameroonian migrants within the European Union is more than what is indicated in these figures. However, I am aware that getting data for undocumented migrants can be quite complex.

Another crucial challenge was how to distinguish my position as a researcher and a friend. Over time, my informants and I have become so intimate and sometimes, when possible, I would lend money to anyone asking for help. Informants sometimes called me and shared their problems, both family problems and problems concerning their stay in Switzerland, relationships with their boyfriend, fiancé or husband, and I would do same, especially in moments when I am choking up with having to multitask taking care of my sick parents, paying for school fees for some family members, settling family disputes, and reading and writing term papers. Thus, sometimes it was difficult for me to keep a distance between this emotional/passionate self and my scientific self as a researcher vis-à-vis my informants.

This was particularly the case with my female informants. Being a young girl conducting research with other girls within the same age range sometimes made it difficult for me to see and treat them as more of informants than friends. Sometimes informants spent weekends at my little student room. We went shopping, cooked, ate, watched movies, and slept together on the same bed. We also sometimes did go and send money together. I helped my undocumented friends send money in my name, and we interacted almost on a weekly basis. Before conducting formal interviews, the information we shared as friends also constituted my ethnographic data; at the same time they were information we shared as friends. The memories of these nice moments have kept me in constant communication with my informants. In the course of these interactions, I sometimes unconsciously overlook my position as a researcher. A researcher-informant relationship got obscured in a friend-friend relationship.

Also conducting fieldwork in different locations required so much time and interactions with informants. Because I was based in Geneva, it wasn't possible for me to physically interact constantly with my informant in Ukraine and other informants in Sweden as I did with the informants in Switzerland. Nonetheless we kept in touch virtually. In addition, I would frequently go to Sweden whenever there was a party where I was invited or sometimes just to visit friends. Also, I only stayed in Cameroon for four months (December

2014-March 2015). I feel that it would have been better if I could stay longer. However, I continue to keep in touch with my informants via telephone. Besides, given that my research is to understand the gender and family dynamics in transnational Cameroonian migration from a moral economy perspective, it was more important to carry-out in-depth research with the migrants than with their families since the former are those sending remittances.

Contextual background: The socio-cultural, historical, geographical, and political features of Cameroon and Cameroonian migration

Socio-cultural, economic, geographic, and political landscape of Cameroon

Cameroon is situated on the Guinea coast of West Africa. In the 17th and early 18th century, the country was subjected to a Hausa-Fulani land invasion, then Portuguese slave trading on its coast, and later German annexation in 1884 (Fearon, & Laitin, 2005)⁵⁷. Britain and France took over Cameroon in 1914 after Germany was defeated in the First World War. The country was shared into two parts and France took a larger portion of the country (8 out of 10 provinces). French Cameroon was ruled by France under the policy of assimilation while British Cameroon was ruled under the policy of indirect rule⁵⁸. French Cameroon gained independence from France in 1960 under the name *la Republique du Cameroun* with Amahdou Ahidjo as president (Bayart, 1973, Ngoh, 1996: 100-167, Fanson, 1989). British Cameroon was administered as part of the British colony of Nigeria and its headquarter was in Enugu in Nigeria. It joined *la Republique du Cameroun* after the 1961 plebiscite

⁵⁷ The Portuguese traders sailing through the river Wouri saw so much prawns that they described the river as *Rio dos Cameroes* (which in Portuguese means river of prawns). *Cameroes* was later translated as *Kamerun* upon the arrival of the Germans and during the Anglo-French rule, *Kamerun* became *Cameroon* and *Cameroun* respectively.

⁵⁸ Indirect rule was a system of government used by the British to control their colonial empires particularly in Africa. With this system, the day-to-day administration of the towns and villages within the colonies was left in the hands of the local traditional rulers. Assimilation was the policy used by France to govern its colonies. With this system of governance, the French sought to implant French culture and civilization on her colonial subjects with the intention of civilizing the uncivilized African and made them French.

organized by the United Nations⁵⁹. After the plebiscite, Cameroon remained a federal state until 1972 when the two Cameroons united to become one, but differentiated as Anglophones and Francophones. In 1982, Paul Biya constitutionally succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo as president of Cameroon (Awasom, 2000: 93-94, Fanzo 1989). He remains in power until now.

Today, Cameroon has a total of ten provincial regions, eight French speaking (Francophones) and two English speaking – Anglophones (South West and North West regions). The country's heterogeneity is a testament to its multiple politico-socio-cultural and economic structures. Forje, (2007: 9) maintains that the country has a total of about 273 ethnic languages and groups excluding the two official languages which are English and French. It has a total population of about 22.3 million people (World Bank, 2013) most of whom are youths between the ages of 18-35 years. Pidgin English is the lingua franca of Anglophone Cameroon while Fulfulde is the lingua franca of the Muslim dominated north of the country.

Cameroon has one oil refining company located in the South West region; it also has seven public universities and many other institutions of higher learning. Two out of these public universities are Anglophones. Most Cameroonians, (more than half of Cameroon's population) depend on agriculture and its related activities for their livelihoods. In addition, most of the country's raw materials such as cocoa, rubber, banana, tea, palm oil, to name a few come from the South West region due to the presence of the volcanic rich soils in this part of the country. It is also said that this plantation agriculture constitutes the backbone of Cameroon's economy employing about 85 percent of the population. Around 32 percent of the country's population are salary workers (Monga 1986, Kom 2001:

⁵⁹ During the UN Plebiscite in 1961, British Southern Cameroon was asked to vote whether they wanted to remain under the British colony of Nigeria or to join French Cameroon. Without a third choice of whether they wanted to be an independent country, they voted to join French Cameroon. This union of the two Cameroons is said to have created a hierarchical structure which privileges the Francophones at the disadvantage of the Anglophones (Pelican 2013). It is also known to be the root cause of what has become known as the "Anglophone problem", that is, the Anglophones perception that they are marginalised by the Francophones (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997, 2003, Jua and Konings, 2004).

26-29, 34). Figures from the World Bank shows that Cameroon's GNP per capita in 2013 stood at 1.290USD, total GDP was 29.57 billion USD. The average life expectancy at birth is 55 years⁶⁰.

Cameroon is bounded to the north by Nigeria, north-east by Chad, to the east by the Central Africa Republic and to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (see map 1). The north of the country is made up of the Adamawa plateau and a fraction of the Lake Chad basin. It is the savanna region of the country and dominated by the Muslims. In the south is the forest plateau; with a pluralism of lineage societies who are largely Christian. The coastal region is forested but also a bit hilly with sometimes high humidity. The western mountains are largely deforested, divided into extensive centralised chiefdoms where the impact of Christian missionaries was not as intense as in the South. Besides this geographical distinction; it is also linguistically divided between Anglophones and Francophones. It is because of this geographical and cultural heterogeneity that Cameroon is described as "the microcosm of Africa" (Bayart, 1984: 9) and also referred to as "Africa in miniature" (meaning that the country contains every type of peoples, languages, geography, and raw materials found in other African countries).

With the Francophone-Anglophone divide, there are two statutory legal systems which operate, that is, the civil and the common law respectively. This is also the case with the educational system divided into the French and the Anglo-Saxon systems alongside many bilingual schools. Secondary education is divided into 5 and 2 years in the Anglophone system. Under this system the public exams are G.C.E. (General Certificate of Education) Ordinary level which is written in form five and G.C.E Advance level is written in upper-sixth. Secondary education in the Francophone system is 4 and 3 years and the public exams here are B.E.P.C, Probatoire, and Baccalaureat. According to UNICEF statistics, the adult literacy rate between the years 2008-2012 for Cameroon was about 71.3 percent. There are many political parties with CPDM as the ruling party and SDF as the main opposition party.

⁶⁰ World Bank, 2013 statistics.

<http://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon> (accessed 11.06.2015)

Unemployment rates for young people between the ages of 15-35 in 2010 were about 13 percent while the level of under employment was 71.9 percent. The young people between the ages of 7-40 years represents 37 percent of the population (African Economic Outlook, 2012: 12). The youths constitute the majority of the Cameroonian population. These youths are those within the active age group who look for economic opportunities within and out of Cameroon. Demographic characteristics of my informants confirm that young people between the ages of 25-40 are the main transnational migrants.

A note on ethnicity and kinship relations

Ethnicity

There are five main ethnic groups in Cameroon. These are: the Coastal Tropical Forest Peoples (who represent 12% of the total population of Cameroon). Some of the groups that make up this ethnic region include the Bakweris, Dualas⁶¹, Bambokos, Wouris, to name a few. The Western Highlands/Grassfielders (who represent 38% of the total population) are all the groups in the Bamenda plateau and the Western region (the Bamums and the Bamilekes)⁶². The Southern Tropical Forest Peoples (14 %) live in the Centre, East, South regions. Here, we find major groups such as the Betis, Ewondos, Bulus, Etons, the Makas, to name a few. There is also the Fulani (Islamic Northerners 12%) and the Kirdi (Non-Islamic Northerners 18%) (Eyongetah and Brain, 1974: 50, Ngoh, 1996: 27, Fearon and Laitin, 2005: 2, Mbaku 2005: 1-2). In the following paragraphs, I present a summary account of the kinship relations and cultural practices of the three non-Muslim ethnic peoples of Cameroon, that is, the Coastal Tropical Forest peoples, Southern Tropical Forest Peoples, and the Western Highlands/Grassfielders.

⁶¹ The Dualas as a people (spelt as such) are the indigenes of Douala (the economic capital of Cameroon).

⁶² The Bamilekes are geographically and linguistically Francophone but culturally they belong to the Grassfields (see map 2 on ethnic locations). It is for this cultural likeness to the Anglophones of the Northwest region that they are often described as “anglo-Bami”.

The former two have similar cultural practices which are quite distinct from the latter.

Generally, polygyny is still practiced (although to a lesser extent compared to precolonial times) and pre-puberty betrothal of girls was a common practice across the different groups. Fathers were responsible to marry wives for their sons and to pay the bride price. Marriage payments were originally made in material items (goods and animals). Money was introduced in the payment of bride price around the mid 1800 following European colonization and the end of trade by barter.

Depending on the specific tribal group, descent is either patrilineal or matrilineal. However, amongst some of the groups that make up the Coastal Tropical Forest people e.g. the Bakweris, it is said that although patrilineal links are stronger and dominant, descent through the mother is important (Basel Mission book depot, 1958: 13-14). This is because (as oral history indicates) women in this ethnic group often marry more than twice during their reproductive life. Ardener, (1956) study confirms that Bakweri women often divorced husbands who didn't take care of them financially through the provision of what was described as "maintenance money".

Unlike other groups such as the Grassfielders and the Northerners where divorce was shameful and condemned, for the Coastal Tropical forest people, such a practice was tolerated. In a survey carried out during his research among the Bakweris in the 1950s, Ardener observed that 63 percent of all legitimate unions in a completed sample of 1062 village women had ended in divorce. In addition, one in six existing unions was illegitimate, that is, couples were not been married according to native laws and customs; but rather practicing various forms of concubinage and prostitution. Fertility rate was 2.0 which was the lowest compared to other groups in Cameroon and West Africa. Lack of 'maintenance money' (money for upkeep/care) was recorded as the main motive for divorce (Ardener, 1958, 1960 [1996]: 197, 204-205, 238). With such high rates of marriage instability, it helps to make sense of, and understand why Bakweri and other Coastal Tropical forest groups practice both patrilineal and matrilineal descent although the former dominates. These peoples were among the first to encounter European social

practices and institutions and were also the first to accept Christianity (Mbaku, 2005: 12-13).

Marriages between close and distant kin are prohibited, polygyny is practiced but the position of the first wife is not given recognition in terms of seniority. The first son would be the next of kin, where there is no first son, the brother of the deceased will inherit. Women couldn't inherit because they were considered as property to be inherited upon the death of the husband (Basel Mission Book Depot, 1958: 14).

Secret societies and ancestral worship is not firmly enforced in these groups. In addition, they have a loose oligarchy. They are somewhat egalitarian and the chief possesses no authoritarian power and there are no special taboos associated with the assumption of his duties as chief. Gender division of labour is practiced; the women cultivate crops to feed the family while the men engage in fishing or hunting.

In sum, what we learn from the case of the Coastal Tropical Forest peoples and the Southern Tropical Forest Peoples of Cameroon is that [indigenous] African peoples and their lifestyles were not as communal, homogenous, authoritarian with many taboos, high fertility and birth rates, dominance of elders as documented in many anthropological studies on family and kinship patterns in Africa; e.g. (Locoh 1989, Adepoju 1997, Makinwa-Adebusoye 2001).

These characteristics rather describe the lifestyles of the people in the Western Highlands/Grassfielders (graffi). Unlike the other groups mentioned above, the Grassfielders are strictly hierarchically embedded in a system of taboos and norms. The Grassfield kingdoms are called Fondoms. The palace is the central place of authority and the Fon is the paramount ruler. There are many taboos associated with his assumption of duties. For instance no one can shake hands with the Fon.

A sophisticated ritual process during installation transforms the Fon into a sacred being possessing both a physical and an immortal body. Possessing an immortal body means that Fons don't die, they go 'missing' and are retrieved in their successors. He plays a lead role to multiply his fondom by marrying many wives and giving birth to

many children. The Fon settles disputes amongst his subjects and carry out major annual sacrifices and ceremonies; pouring libations to the ancestors of the land. He possesses the power of life and death contained in his breath, saliva, and sperm which he redistributes to his subjects and to his wives through the process of procreation (Diduk 1993: 555, Feldman-Savelsberg, 1999: 67-68, Warnier 2012, 2009). Warnier notes that the Fon in the Grassfields is a container, a pot-king; in him can be found the substances of prosperity, death, and life. He writes that:

“The notable or the king is not to be likened with a container. His body is a container that safe-keeps and stores ancestral substances: breath, speech, saliva, semen, and associated substances: raffia wine, palm oil, camwood powder, medicines. Such is the king: a ‘pot king’, corpulent, filled up, sitting at the top of the social hierarchy whose principal function consists in anointing, spraying, speaking, blowing, smearing camwood, ejaculating so as to bestow the life essence and reproductive principles on his subjects, his spouses, the land, the crops, livestock to insure their health and reproduction” (Warnier 2012: 7, 2009: 17-19)

The basis of social organization is localized patrilineage with patrilocal residential pattern and patrilineal descent with the exception of the few matrilineal groups (e.g. Wum, Kom, and Fungom). The Grassfielders have a strong ancestral worship and believe that the ancestors live after death and watch over the living members of the lineage⁶³. The ancestors can bless but can also curse

⁶³ This explains why important family event such as marriage, death, appointment to a position, as well as migration are celebrated with the head of family, clan, lineage, village, or the Fon pouring libations to invoke the blessings of the ancestors (see Warnier, 1993a). I have witnessed and experienced cases where parents poured libations to invoke the blessings of the ancestors before the departure of a migrant. After the libation has been poured, the father drinks palm wine or water from his traditional cup (which is usually a cow horn) and then give it to the person who is about to migrate to drink so that his/her migration project should be successful for the benefit of the family.

his/her descendants if they are forgotten⁶⁴. Amongst the Bamilekes for example, paternal and maternal skulls form the object of a cult. These skulls are dug up months or sometimes years after burial of the deceased and kept in a special place or shrine where members of the lineage visit to seek for blessings. With this practice, it is believed that bad luck or misfortune will affect families that ignore or abandon the skulls of their ancestors. Similar practices take place among the Bamums. Generally speaking, amongst the Grassfielders, there is strong sacredness associated with the king and he is responsible for performing the annual sacrifices to the gods and ancestors.

Child bearing is particularly important and unless one has given birth to at least a child, s/he is described as a small girl, or small boy. Acquiring a political voice that carries weight is impossible unless one 'has put to birth'. Having children is so important that those of child bearing age without children are sometimes chided publicly by friends. Children are 'one's old age firewood'. In local parlance, children are often referred to as the 'walking canes' for aged parents⁶⁵. Due to the presence of fondoms, traditional practices are still very much alive in the Grassfields compared to other regions of Cameroon. Polygyny is very common and the position of seniority enjoyed by first wives in polygynous marriages is highly respected (Diduk, 1993: 555-558, Feldman-Savelsberg, 1999).

The Grassfielders possessed a distinctive pattern of economic specialization upon which participation in exchange networks was based. Over time, male cadets needed to possess the main trading goods which were palm oil, salt, cowries, camwood⁶⁶; and this marked entry into adulthood. In addition, these goods are important in traditional ceremonies such as marriage payments (Fowler and Zeitlyn, 1996: 4). Other goods which also have prestige included guns and gun powder. When a boy reaches maturity, the father would be

⁶⁴ There is also a common practice to name children born after deceased relatives. In this way, it is considered that the relatives are still alive through the person bearing the deceased's name.

⁶⁵ Children are considered as the 'walking canes' for aged parents all across Africa.

⁶⁶ Camwood is a red powder substance which is used for many traditional functions in the Grassfields (e.g. in marriages and for pouring libations). For more information, see Warnier, (1993a: 311-312)

responsible to choose a wife for him and it was rare for a man to refuse the choice of his father given that the father was responsible for providing the items/goods that were needed for the bride price payment. Besides, refusing the father's choice would be considered obstinate and such refusals can be met with punishment by the father as well as other elders (Fowler and Zeitlyn 1996, Warnier 1980, 1993a, 1996).

Attaining adulthood for men means being in a possession of certain status objects, in particular a gun. The importance of a gun lies in the fact that it is used during death ritual ceremonies for special notables and people of certain ages. Amongst the Mankons in particular, Warnier, (1980) contends that a gun is a symbol of wealth and manhood, a man became a man once he had a land, a wife, and a gun. In the colonial days, guns were part of the rites of passage to adulthood/manhood. A man without a gun was laughed at and called a woman (see also Warnier, 2012: 65). He adds that, marriage was the determinant to be considered a 'man' (*ngwo*). A bachelor is not *ngwo*; no matter his age, he remains a 'child' (*nni*) Warnier (1995: 262)⁶⁷. This seems to justify why the quest for possessing the goods needed for marriage was also a strong motivation for labour migration to the coast amongst the Grassfielders⁶⁸. In her study, the informants of Kaberry, (1952: 88) explained the importance of marriage in the following words: "A youth begins to grow; he gets a wife, and then he acquires common sense. If he has not a wife, he has no sense!" The Grassfielders have 8 days in a week, and the 8th day is called *kontri Sunday* (in Pidgin English) a day for rest.

In sum, compared to the other non-Muslim ethnicities in Cameroon, the Grassfielders have distinct ethnic characteristics. Warnier for example summarizes how these Grassfields

⁶⁷ Amongst the Bafut (and in the Bafut language, Mankon's neighbours) the expression *o ni ngwo* (meaning you are a man) is used when a man has done something great e.g. birth of twins especially if the twins are both males.

⁶⁸ With colonisation, a monetary economy was introduced. This meant that marriage payments were no longer made only in goods and services but also with money. Young men also needed money to pay their taxes. As shown in the sections that follow, it can therefore be said that, introduction of a monetary economy spearheaded coastal migration.

characteristics operate in contrast with e.g. the Beti, the forest people of Cameroon (Guyer, 1986). He noted that:

« ... Alors que chez les Beti de la forêt, par exemple, tous les fils héritent également de leur père, chez les Grafi la succession va en bloc à l'un d'entre eux qui prend le nom et la place du père. Il ne serait pas inexact de dire qu'à la mort d'un Beti, sa tirelire est brisée et son contenu redistribué entre ses fils. Les funérailles s'accompagnent de destructions massives, d'un éparpillement des personnes dépendantes et des biens, d'une consommation effrénée. A l'inverse chez les Grassfields, c'est la tirelire intacte, pleine et entière que le notable défunt passe à son successeur qui en devient le gardien, un gardien gestionnaire de son bon usage, économe de substance vitale, constamment soucieux d'y laisser un solde positif » (Warnier, 1993b : 127).

Kinship relations

In Cameroon, as in other Sub-Saharan African countries, there is a strong reliance on the family for the success of an individual, be it in relation to migration or other aspects in life. Although an extensive anthropological study on family and kinship systems is out of the scope of this study, it is however important to briefly contextualise family organisation patterns in Cameroon. The perception of family in Cameroon tends to be seen as encompassing both the extended and the nuclear family⁶⁹.

Radcliffe-Brown, (1950: 3) in his study on African systems of kinship notes that in this context, kinship relations are a working system linking human beings in a network of social interactions, bounded by particular customs that serve as the functioning parts of the social machinery. Classical anthropological studies about African family life have underlined the holistic nature of kinship groups in which the welfare of the individual is promoted and any individual success is seen to be for the common good of the entire family (see

⁶⁹ This broad notion of family resonates with the data of this book where a migrant can consider a family friend with whom she grew up with as a mother or father.

e.g. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, 1950). The identification of authority and responsibility with parenthood is quite embedded within family settings in Cameroon as Kaberry, (1952) observes among the Nsaw in the Northwest region. She writes that “family relationships, especially those of parenthood and siblingship, serve as a paradigm for a wide range of relationships in the fields of kinship, economics and political organisation. Both mother and father occupy positions associated with respect, authority and privilege on the one hand, and with active sense of responsibility towards dependents on the other” (1952: 151).

Forde, (1969: 231) study shows that among the Akan people of Ghana, reciprocity and respect are paramount moral values that are central to household and family. The tendency to depend on others for help and similarly to be depended on in return is a central feature of family and kinship organisation. Rowlands, (1988) and Warnier, (1993b) studies describe similar practices of mutual dependence in Cameroon. They maintain that the norms of (re)distribution is so strongly enforced that one cannot [outwardly] refuse to help or being help by family members, for doing so will be considered as wicked or being inconsiderate to the family’s welfare. Elder siblings help their parents to take care of the younger ones. In cases where they are gainfully employed, they help with financial upbringing of the younger siblings. Hence it is often common to find that when an older sibling became financially independent, s/he takes one of the younger sibling or an extended younger relative to come live with him/her (see also Rowlands, 1988). When a girl gets married, she is expected to bring in a younger sibling or any other younger relative to come live with her. She considers him/her as her first child who is treated as such.

Kaberry, (1952) study shows that in precolonial times, although men had more political power in terms of decision making in and out of the household, women’s reproductive capacity and their productive power as the food providers of the community did give women status and respect. Although women only had usufruct rights to land, their role as the food providers was not undermined. However, the arrival of the colonial masters and the introduction of a monetary economy and plantation agriculture subordinated women

(Kaberry 1952, Goheen 1996). This new family structure introduced the male-as-breadwinner model, with male considered responsible for the provision of food and shelter. Marriage and motherhood or fatherhood still remains central prerequisite for adulthood.

When married, a man is expected to take care of his wife financially and materially. As a matter of fact, the measure of a man's love for his wife or girlfriend is how he takes care of her financially, including taking care of his in-laws. Men who do not take care of their wives are branded as "gold-diggers" (synonymous to good-for-nothing men). In Francophone Cameroon, they are described as "les gigolos". As Kaberry, (1952: 114) rightly noted, married men are expected to take care of their in-laws and present them with gifts and "the newly married man is expected to be lavish, but if his earnings remain small, and he has many children, he is not pressed unduly by his affines". In a village setting, a married man is supposed to present gifts of wine, fowls, oil, or salt to his father-in-law when the latter is to build a house. And he has to do the same to the head of his wife's lineage. His mother-in-law, when visiting, must be treated as an honoured guest and given a parting gift of oil, salt, and perhaps a little meat. And in case of death in his wife's family, he is expected to contribute (pg.114).

Polygyny is still prevalent although to a lesser extent compared to precolonial times. Under customary law amongst the different groups in Cameroon, a man is allowed to marry more than one wife. Polygyny is also accepted under statutory law but the consent of the first wife must be taken into consideration. In polygynous marriages, each wife is considered the head of her household. However, there has been a decline in this type of marital union. What is more evident is the practice of being married but having a mistress or mistresses. Some men end up having a child or children with their mistresses. On average, a household in Cameroon comprises of about 6-10 persons; that is, father, mother, and children (biological and sometimes including non-biological).

As echoed before, there is a central cultural norm of child fosterage which firmly shape family organisation in Cameroon. Child fostering is known to be an age-old institution in Africa especially in West Africa (see e.g. Goody 1982, Isiugo-Abanihe 1985, Bledsoe and

Isiugo-Abanihe 1989, Allman 1997). In this system, parents entrust their children to the extended family members in the city in the hope that a brighter future await the child in an urban context. In such cases, parents are often poor rural dwellers (but they can also be poor urban dwellers) who entrust their children to the care of a family relative in the city. Some of these children become house helper (maid-servants) to these city dwellers as documented in Goody, (1982). This is especially the case for female children. In other cases, a foster relative becomes the ‘parents’ of another relative’s child or children and takes the responsibility for their moral and financial upbringing. These fostering arrangements are usually informal and are based on unwritten/intimate agreements about the duties and responsibilities of the persons involved. The studies of Goody, (1982) and Alber, (2003) affirm that these rights and responsibilities in [West] African child fosterage are subject to negotiations and are based on reciprocal relations and trust between kin. In these contexts, children are seen as belonging to the lineage of their birth throughout their life therefore relocating to be fostered in another household is seen as reaffirming kinship and social ties between the biological parents and the new parents (Bledsoe and Sow, 2011: 748-749). In some cases, the new parents can be people who don’t belong to the child’s kinship group. It can be sometimes, a family friend from another ethnic group.

In sum, although family solidarity and support is still firmly enforced, Crentsil (2012: 37) asserts that structural changes have facilitated a tendency for individualistic orientation. Nonetheless, the extended family system as well as social and kinship ties are still central features that speak of a sense of belonging and communality. It is in this line of thought that Sahlins, (2013: 19: 21, 67) concludes that “kinship is thicker than blood” meaning that those we considered family can also include people beyond blood relations.

Building on a history of migration: plantation agriculture and internal mobility in Cameroon

The annexation of Cameroon by Germany was influenced by the German traders, in particular Adolph Woerman who first established

his firm in Douala in 1868. In his quest to protect his trade establishment, Woerman sought protection from his government, calling on the German Chancellor Bismarck to annex Cameroon. The Chancellor's reluctance to engage in colonization was overcome in 1884 when Dr. Nachtigal finally arrived for the annexation of Cameroon. The treaties that were signed between the Germans and chiefs Bell and Akwa legalized German annexation in what became known as the Germano-Douala treaty of July 2nd 1884 (Basel Mission, 1958: 46-48).

Shortly after the annexation treaty establishing Cameroon as a German protectorate, the Germans wanted to by-pass the middleman monopoly by the Dualas to relate directly with the local population. However, this was not possible due to lack of road infrastructure and difficulty in communication. These difficulties gave birth to the idea of plantation agriculture in the coastal lands. The rationale was that, firstly, plantation agriculture would provide the Germans with the goods that could not be obtained from the hinterlands due to lack of road infrastructure. Secondly, the quality of the products would be guaranteed due to direct supervision. Coastal lands were alienated for the establishment of these cash-crops plantation agriculture⁷⁰. Due to the rich volcanic soil, the Southwest region in particular served and still serves as the main farming area⁷¹. Local male labourers were recruited, as the introduction of taxes by the Germans compelled men to seek paid employment. Wages to workers varied according to the length of service. The average wage was eight to nine German marks per month (Basel Mission, 1958: 46-48)⁷².

⁷⁰ In some cases, the lands for plantation agriculture were alienated without the prime concern of the natives. The two German companies operating the plantations were the Kamerun Land und Plantagen-Gesellschaft and the West Afrikanische Pflanzungsgesellschaft Victoria (W.A.P.V). While the former title to land ownership was through direct occupation, the latter company obtained Land through purchase from the natives (Ardener 1960[1996]: 151-152)

⁷¹ Plantation agriculture was extended during the Anglo-French period. At independence, the plantations became known as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC).

⁷² The introduction of taxes and a monetary economy compelled men to seek for paid employment. Salaries saved from such employment enabled young men to afford bride price payments. As mentioned before, the end of the barter system

However, reliance on local male labour proved insufficient for the much needed work in the plantations, so male labour was recruited from other regions in Cameroon, especially from the Grassfield⁷³. This region already had a reputation as a labour reservoir⁷⁴. This explains why Eugene Zingraft, a German explorer travelled to the Grassfield in the dry season of 1888-9 to establish trade links and recruited labour through the help of intermediaries (Warnier, 1995: 264). By 1913, a Basel Mission report, (1958: 47) shows that, there were 18,000 labourers in the plantations. The natives called these labourers “immigrants”, (amongst these immigrants were also labourers from neighbouring Nigeria). In the

meant payments of bride price were not only limited to goods and services but also included financial payments. However, such payments varied across families and ethnic groups. For example Kaberry, (1952: 25) notes that in the areas of Bali, Ndop, Bafut, and Meta in Northwest Cameroon, marriage payments were frequently made in cash and only a small balance in oil, livestock, salt, to cite a few. “Regular wage-earners or relatively wealthy traders are spoken of as “gentleman of the town”, and in keeping with their status, are expected to disburse more”. In Ndop for example, “an ordinary man” would pay £6 (6 British Pounds) while a “gentleman” about £10 (10 British pounds).

⁷³ This mass recruitment of labour from the Grassfield was described in Pidgin English as “Bamenda-come-down”. These labourers were transported to the coast in lorries. Bamenda is the capital city of the Northwest region, one of the major areas that make up the Grassfield region. Konings, (1993: 68) affirmed in his study that the Northwest region was indeed the main supplier of plantation labour with a percentage of 73.5 percent of the total labour force. As a way to recruit even more labourers, Eyongetah and Brain, (1974) noted that the Germans introduced a generic tax (also known as poll tax as described in Rowlands, 1998, and Loeb, 1900) system where every grown up male capable of labour was obliged to pay six German marks per year. Later in 1913, the amount to be paid as taxes was raised to ten German marks. Local chiefs assisted in the recruitment of labour and could get 10 percent of profit. Taxes were also paid for moving from place to place for trade. It should be noted that these taxes were different from the head tax which was payments by men who were married to two or more wives. The Germans introduced this tax on the Dualas in 1903 but it was met with violent resistance (Eyongetah and Brain, 1974: 91-92). For a detailed explanation on German fiscal system on its colonies including Cameroon, see Loeb, (1900).

⁷⁴ This labour reservoir was largely due to the fact that in this region, polygyny was rampant with higher birth rates, larger family sizes, and higher fertility rate compared to the coastal people where fertility rate was lower (Ardener [1958] 1996).

coastal town of Buea⁷⁵, these immigrants occupied specific neighbourhoods reserved for them. These non-indigenes were also described as strangers, and over time, they began to move inwards into neighbourhoods reserved for the natives (Ardener 1956: 31, 1960[1996]: 158, 163). Till this present day in Buea, there is a neighbourhood called “stranger quarters” (in the Bakweri language, stranger quarter is *livéndé la waiim*)⁷⁶. Following the 1953 census, the total population of immigrants to indigenes in Victoria division in the Southwest region was 68.3 to 31.7 respectively (Ardener 1960[1996]: 162-164)⁷⁷.

The main cash-crops cultivated were rubber, palm nuts, and tea. The local chiefs served as the brokers (middlemen) in facilitating the assemblage of labour from the hinterlands to the coast. There were also high death rates recorded due to diseases such as small pox and the climatic conditions of the coast. From their salaries, workers paid their taxes and used some of their accumulated savings to buy goods from the plantation factories when they went home to visit their families. The goods sold at the plantation factories were European goods and workers who returned with these goods to their families in the home villages were envied. By being in possession of European goods, these men dressed differently from their village comrades. In the sense of Kaberry, (1952: 25) they were described as “gentlemen” against “ordinary men” (those men who never left the village). These “gentlemen” were also considered to be richer and they possessed a higher social status compared to men in the villages who hadn’t migrated to the coast. It is said that such aesthetics inspired other men to migrate to the coast to work in the plantations so that they

⁷⁵ Buea is the capital city of the Southwest region and it was the headquarters during German occupation of Cameroon.

⁷⁶ The Bakweris who are the indigenes of Buea refer to Grassfield immigrants as *bajily* (‘stranger’).

⁷⁷ This mass immigration to the coast launched the debate on autochthony in contemporary Cameroon. According to Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000: 423, 426) the problem of autochthony is rooted in an ethnic citizenship invariably defined against “strangers”—that is, against all those who “do not really belong”. They noted that due to the plantations that attracted many labourers, the Southwest region in particular has become the hub of confrontations about autochthony and exclusion. See also Geschiere and Jackson (2006).

can also become financially rich and also rich in European goods (Brain and Eyongetah, 1974: 84, 88).

During fieldwork, I spoke with three retired plantation workers including my dad. These men are all in their late 70s. Mr. Timothy explained to me that girls in the villages preferred to marry men who were working in the coast. For these women, getting married to a man working in the coast meant that her subsequent migration and economic survival was guaranteed. He explained that when a relative approached a girl to seek for her hand in marriage for his/her male relative who was working in the coast, it was very rare that the girl refused since these men were considered to be rich. Relatives back in the villages looked for wives for their brothers, uncles, and siblings who were working in the coast. When the marriage plans were set up, the labourer travelled to the village for the payment of the bride price. In most cases, it is during this time that the groom and the bride would meet each other for the first time. I use the case of Mr. Lutte to describe how this phenomenon operated:

Mr. Lutte migrated to work in the coastal plantation between the years 1947-8. Upon reaching the coast, he did his apprenticeship in carpentry while working as a labourer in the plantations. As a labourer in the plantation, he had a room in one of the plantation camps in Tiko. After working for 3 years, he felt it was time for him to get married, especially because he had accumulated the money needed for the bride price payments. In the absence of a father, (his father died before he was born), he travelled to the village to see one of his uncles to pass him the information. Within his network of friends, Mr. Lutte's uncle found a wife for him. The uncle took charge in making all the necessary arrangements and did inform Mr. Lutte who later travelled to the village to pay the bride price and met his wife for the first time. After a year, Mr. Lutte's wife joined him in the coast⁷⁸.

When travelling home (to the village), these workers bought gifts for their relatives at home. These gifts which in pidgin were called

⁷⁸ I got the chance to talk to the wives of these men. Although all admitted that men from the coast were desired for marriage, they did say that they didn't marry their husbands because they were 'coast *boys*'.

“Whiteman cargo” (pronounced as carco) included milk, tea, sugar, strong liquor such as rum to name a few⁷⁹. Villagers with relatives in the coast were envied, especially when they were flaunted with Whiteman cargo brought during the dry season. According to den Ouden, (1987: 15) the elders saw the migration of these young men as a means through which they could get a good position to help their families back in the village.

It was also expected that one should build a house in the village as the workers themselves considered that they were strangers in the coastal towns. One retired plantation worker explained this to me in the following words:

“Why will one want to remain in the coast; is it your home/village? You came here to work and to go home when you retire. So everyone has to be ready for his retirement. You need to have a house in the village, your place of origin where you will return upon retirement. You come here to work and go back upon retirement and only come to receive your retirement benefits...”⁸⁰

Most of the neighbors in the plantation camp where I was born did go back home upon retirement. But over time this idea of going back home began to fade-away and some of these immigrants bought land and built houses in the Coast. These non-returned immigrants have often gotten into conflicts with the coastal natives. They and their children are being stigmatized as “came-no-goes” (pronounced as cam-no-go) referring to those who came and never went back (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, 2000, Geschiere, 2005: 57). When someone died, the corpse had to be transported to the village to be buried. Pa Lute explained the significance of this practice in this way:

⁷⁹ Growing up as a child in one of the plantation camps, I saw my mum bought similar goods when she was travelling to the village. My father also did send similar items to his in-laws.

⁸⁰ Original quote in Pidgin English: “You go come remain for Coast say na your kontri? You come here na for work money and when you take pension you get for go back home. So any man get for ready for e pension. You need for get small place for home wey you fit stay when you go back. You come, you work, and then you go back. You only come here for come take your pension money...”

When you die, you need to be buried in your village. C.D.C na Bakweri ground so you no fit gree say make them bury your body for different man e ground. We be strangers for here... [Translation: you need to be buried in your village. C.D.C (Cameroon Development Cooperation) belongs to the Bakweris, it is their soil and one cannot accept to be buried in someone else's soil. We are strangers here]⁸¹.

One can see from the preceding paragraphs that early migration movement in Cameroon has been male dominated. It also demonstrates that migration experience for the different ethnic groups in Cameroon differs. For example it is evident that the Grassfielders have a long history of migration (mainly to work in the colonial plantations) and trade, including long distance trade. Therefore a Grassfielder has prior migration experience while a Bakweri, Duala, or Bassa have none. Particularly interesting in these mobility patterns were the social attributes associated with goods from the coast, the demarcation between “gentlemen versus ordinary men”, natives versus immigrants, and the prestige these men had amongst their peers who had never been to the Coast. As we shall come to see later in chapter 5, a similar pattern operates in today's transnational migration.

A gender analysis on early migration patterns in Cameroon

The introduction of cash crop plantation agriculture by the Germans which became known as the Cameroon Development Corporation— CDC is said to have stirred such internal migration. The departure of the Germans after their defeat in the First World War did not end the recruitment of plantation male labour⁸².

Rather, the maintaining of the tax system by Anglo-French rule meant that paid employment was necessary for the locals; grown-up men needed income to pay for their taxes (Nkwi and Warnier 1982). de Bruijn, (2010: 170) observes that during the colonial plantation

⁸¹ See Geschiere, (2005) on how this practice of being buried in the home village is related to the issue of belonging and autochthony.

⁸² It is this continued internal, and later international migration patterns that prompted Schrieder and Knerr, (2000) to conclude that there is a culture of migration in Cameroon.

era, the migration of people was regulated by the demands of the colonizers. This movement from the Grassfields to the coastal plantations is said to be what accounted for the transfer of young people's working ethos from the Grassfield to the Atlantic coast (Warnier, 1996, 2006). Young males, who Warnier (1996: 116, 118-9) called cadets, constituted a strong labour force for the plantations. He added that beside the fact that these cadets were eager to migrate to the coast to look for paid employment; their migration was also a strategy to avoid the constraints to which they had to submit to various notables in their fondoms. The coast was the hub of the market economy. Therefore the Fons (who are the paramount rulers in the Grassfields region) and notables sought to enforced authority and control to keep cadets, and in particular women and wives from fleeing to the coast.

For Konings, (1993: 60-61) migration to the coast for these adult men was also a way to earn an income to pay for the requested bride wealth upon marriage⁸³. Men who could not migrate were engaged in trade as a means to raise the money that was needed for marriage payments and to pay their taxes. McCulloch, (1954: 28) confirms that the need to accumulate for marriage payment was also an incentive to men's involvement in economic activities. For some of these young men, plantation labour became a rite of passage as a way to quickly reach their masculine status. That is to say, it was a way to work and earned money that will provide them access to manhood. Therefore achieving economic independence and being able to pay the bride wealth appear to have been a strong motivation for male migration to the coast for employment given that a monetary system had replaced the barter economy from the mid-1800⁸⁴. Over the

⁸³ Konings, (1993: 61) explains that there were two streams of labour migration, voluntary labour migration and migrant workers who were recruited through the help of recruitment agency put in place by the CDC after experiencing labour shortage. My dad was one of the voluntary labour migrants from the Grassfields. Each time he explains to us his life trajectory, he always adds: "I had never had any dad, my dad died before I was born and my mother died while giving birth to me. So I struggled on my own, worked for my money and got married to my wife".

⁸⁴ It is important to reiterate that the payment of bride price/wealth used to be the responsibility of the fathers, but that gradually changed and young men were

years, the incentive to work for economic independence, payment of taxes, and bride wealth payments was met with increased aspirations to the status of a 'big man'— senior masculine status which meant promotion from casual labourer to the level of a workers supervisor or higher (Konings, 2012: 9). This means that labourers started aspiring to move from lower levels of work to supervisory roles.

With the invasion of the hinterlands including the Grassfields by the Germans, the chiefs in these communities began to cooperate with the colonizers for the recruitment and migration of male labour to the coast but forbade the migration of women. For Kaberry, (1952: 146-147, 150-152) the restriction of women's migration is rooted in women's ambiguous roles in society: on the one hand, there is recognition of women's indispensable roles as child bearers and food producers, on the other hand, their subordination to patriarchy. It is this control of women's vital productive and reproductive labour that formed the basis of men's prestige, power, and wealth. Meillassoux, (1981) also noted that the control of female migration, especially that of women of child bearing age was a necessity to sustain the domestic mode of (re)production. Similarly, Konings (1996: 329-330), maintains that this refusal of women's migration was due to the vital productive and reproductive roles of women within their communities and society at large.

In her study on gender relations in the Grassfields, Goheen (1996) maintains that local leaders used various means to forbid female migration be it for trade, or formal employment. To these local chiefs, the employment and subsequent migration of women would be a threat to male hegemony and distortion of family organization⁸⁵.

required to work and earn the required financial and material goods needed for marriage payments. During the barter system, bride price payments were made in prestigious goods and services.

⁸⁵ For example, in the discussions leading to the creation of a tea plantation at Ndu in the Northwest region, the chief of Ndu made it explicitly clear to the colonialists that he will only allocate land for tea plantation on one condition, "no employment of female labour and the exclusive recruitment of male labour" (Konings, 1996: 335). It should be noted that the refusal to female employment was not only limited to getting hired in paid work (although there was a general fear amongst men that female employment will give women economic

Konings (2012: 7-8) asserts that, the colonial gender discourse tended to described employment outside the home as masculine and by so doing categorized men and women into ‘breadwinners’ and ‘dependent housewives’ respectively. In this categorization, women could only migrate as male dependents⁸⁶. Some uncompromising women who did migrate autonomously, especially divorced women were branded as prostitutes and harlots—or ‘akwara’ (pidgin English word for prostitute)⁸⁷. Some local chiefs went as far as collaborating with law enforcement to repatriate single women who had migrated to the coast. For example Ruel (1960) quoted in (Konings, 2012: 7-8) noted that the chief of upper Banyang travelled to the southern towns of Anglophone Cameroon to bring back single women who had migrated to the coast. With the help of the police, women from this ethnic group who had been found ‘loitering’ were rounded up and repatriated to their communities of origin.

However, with the passage of time, this male dominated migration faded into a more inclusive male and female migration instigated by the establishment of the Tole Tea plantations in the Southwest region and the Ndu Tea plantations in the Northwest in 1954 and 1957 respectively. The Tole tea plantations started off with exclusive recruitment of women and by 1988, the female labour force was 73 percent against 27 percent men (Konings, 2012: 45)⁸⁸. The

independence and make them disobedient as documented in Konings, 2012: 43), but the resentment was more in terms of preventing women from the benefits that such employment might bring including migration to towns and to the coast.

⁸⁶ Therefore in the sense of Konings, (1996) and Goheen, (1996) the chiefs forbade the migration of women because their absence would threaten food production as well as their reproductive capacity that was needed to the functioning of society at home. Women’s migration would mean that the men would not have a place they could call “home”.

⁸⁷ Obbo (1981) observes a similar pattern in other African countries. She asserts that chiefs in Africa have been keen in promulgating patriarchal controls that restrict women’s mobility; justifying their actions as African ‘traditions’. Women who did escape such patriarchal controls and migrated to towns had to bear the brunt of social ostracism as ‘prostitutes’ for the rest of their lives. In the colonial Congo, these women were labelled “*les femmes libres*” (free women). As a matter of fact, it was considered that ‘town migration is not for women’ (pg. 148, 153)

⁸⁸ It has been argued that there was no resentment towards the employment of women at Tole tea as was the case in the Ndu tea plantation because chieftaincy

chief of Ndu had initially refused the employment and subsequent migration of women, but pressure from the plantation management had compelled him to open up to new ideals. The rationale for female recruitment in the tea plantations was associated with gender stereotypes that associate women to docility and care; as well as the division between 'women's work' (which is considered soft) and 'men's work' (considered hard/difficult). Following this argument, women are considered to have 'nimble fingers' which are best suited for certain tasks like tea picking. Elson and Pearson, (1981) revisit this claim in relation to women employed in textile and aerial assembling factories. They write that:

“Women are considered not only to have nimble fingers but also more docile and willing to accept tough work discipline...and are naturally more suited to tedious, repetitious, monotonous work. Their lower wages are attributed to their secondary status in the labour market which is seen as a natural consequence of their capacity to bear children” (pg: 93).

Nevertheless it is important to mention that the women who were recruited in the tea plantations were older women, unmarried women, divorced women, and widows. Konings (2012) argues that these women were mainly those who resisted the traditional norm of depending on family members for their survival in the absence of a man, but rather chose to bear the societal shame of being described as 'loose/free' women by migrating to towns to seek for employment. In a nutshell, while men could migrate independently, women's migration was resented, and in some cases restricted and they could only migrate as dependents on the main male migrant who was usually a husband.

Besides plantation-labour driven migration in Cameroon, rural to urban migration in other towns and cities gained prominence following increased economic hardship in the villages starting around the early 1980s. Franqueville, (2003: 84-86) examined these migration

in the former is weak compared to the latter. As mentioned before, the southern coastal people have a loose system of chieftaincy compared to the Grassfields. Geschiere, (1993) study confirms this assertion.

patterns for the different ethnic groups in Francophone Cameroon. In his study, he affirms that the urban migrant was male, young, single, did not possess any resources in the village, and was migrating in search of employment. From the late 1980s, following increases in education and the search for better opportunities, this male-dominated city migration gradually decline; more women started migrating too, refusing to conform to impose marriages in the villages. They also migrated in search for economic opportunities. In comparing the migration patterns of the Southerners (Beti, Ewondo, Bulu, Eton) to the Bamilekes, he makes the case that the village of origin was always at the centre of Southern migrants' life; that is to say "le chez moi c'est mon village". While for the Bamilekes, they carried out infrastructural investments in the cities they have migrated too. This is particularly the case for the Bamilekes who migrated and settled in Douala.

In sum, one can see that the migration of women, and in particular single women have not always been easy in Cameroon and beyond. As documented in the above sections, the chiefs played an important role in colonial capitalist expansion through the supply of male labour in the plantations. Nonetheless, they did so with caution, making sure that the 'traditional' family system was kept in place, meaning women had to stay at home.

This restriction was uplifted following the establishment of the tea plantations between 1954 and 1957, the increase monetization of the economy, and later economic factors that forced families to reconsider the male-as-bread-winner family model. This gendered pattern in early migration flows in Cameroon confirm studies on gender and migration by various authors in different countries e.g. (Oishi 2005, Piper 2008) who argued that while men have always been free to move, the migration of women have always been restricted, contested, and in some cases denied. Besides economic factors, it is evident that increased education of women has also contributed to female autonomous migration. As a matter of fact, some parents say that if they have to choose, they would prefer to send their female child rather than their male child abroad (see appendix 1 with a sequence of Cameroonian migration flow patterns over the years starting from the 1950s).

Why Cameroonians migrate: The socio-cultural, moral, and economic aspects of transnational Cameroonian migration

“Francis broke the news to her one day after their evening meal. Pa had agreed, he said. Adah was full of happiness that she started to dance an African calypso. So they were going at last! She was going to be called ‘been-to’, which was a Lagos phrase for those who had ‘been to England’” (Second-class Citizen by Buchi Emecheta, 1974. Pg. 23-24).

Been tos’, ‘America wandas’, and mbengis/bushfallers

Contemporary Cameroonian migration extends beyond the national borders. With increasing economic crises, emigration dynamics in Sub Saharan Africa changed (Adepoju, 1995). The male and female international Cameroonian migrant population increased from 145,527 and 119,817 in 1990 to 162,411 and 129,381 in 2013 respectively (Cameroon migration profile, UNICEF 2013 statistics). Morais, (2007) observes that transnational migration to Europe, especially in Anglophone Cameroonian started during the British rule. The British colonial policy of indirect rule needed local educated elites, so young Cameroonians from privileged local families went to study abroad. These educated elites were referred to as the “been tos” (plural, “been to” singular); that is, those who have “been to” to the Whiteman’s land. Martin, (2007) maintains that during the time of transition from colonial to post-colonial period, the “been tos” were popular in most West African countries. She writes that:

“The term was widely applied to describe persons who had travelled abroad to be educated, mainly to Europe or America. After returning, they worked in prestigious and well-paying jobs as administrators, lawyers, engineers, or medical doctors and were looked upon with respect by those who had never been able to see the ‘white man’s kontri’ at first hand. “Been-tos” were easy to recognize by their

appearance (suit and tie), their use of language and pronunciation (English with British or American accent), their cultural speech and by their distinguished behaviour [...]. Many “been-tos” have achieved leading positions in politics, business and administration in the course of decolonization, and in this context the term symbolized western knowledge, progress, material wealth and social prestige” (2007: 208-209).

Morais, (2007: 3) notes that this elite, education-oriented type of migration increased in the independence period, that is in the early Sixties, spurred by the fact that the new independent countries needed a local ruling class, educated according to Western culture.

Another term which existed in Anglophone Cameroon was ‘American Wanda’⁸⁹. The America Wandas were similar to the ‘been tos’ in terms of the motives for migration which was educationally oriented. But unlike the ‘been tos’ who were excited to return home to take up the available vacant posts created as a result of independence, the America Wandas initial quest for return was thwarted by the economic crises that had set into the country from the late 1980s. According to Fondong, (2008) “America Wanda” is an expression that originated from the performance song of a well-known former West Cameroon (which is today’s Anglophone Cameroon) magician who before the start of his so-called magical performances would elicit the crowd with the song: ‘come and see America Wanda, who no know America Wanda’.

Just like the ‘been tos’, the migration patterns of the America Wandas were education oriented. They were junior civil servants and other intermediate staff who travelled abroad mainly to the US for further studies in order to return home to obtain better paying jobs. Unfortunately by the time American Wandas finished school, the economic crisis had set in and most of them stayed in America. They

⁸⁹ I thank Prof. Peter Geschiere for drawing my attention to this during our discussion in April 2015. Although as a child, we often used the term to describe someone who wore leather clothes and had curly hair (jelly curls), I had never questioned the origin of the term. It was often common to hear people say: ‘s/he wants to show me America Wanda’ when someone was exhibiting distinct behaviours.

rarely visited home and when they did, they could easily be identified by their distinctively lifestyle by way of dressing (jelly-curly hair with leather jackets and boots), speech (with an American accent), and even how they walked. The American Wandas and their relatives were considered to belong to a different class— an upper class (Fondong, 2008)⁹⁰.

With the unset of the economic crises and the continuous desire for the youth to quench their thirst of success by being part of the benefits flowing from migration, Cameroonian migration dynamics changed from a “been-to” /America Wanda type of migration to a “huzzling” type of migration. With this changing emigration dynamics, concepts such as “been tos” gave way to new concepts: “bush”, “bushfalling”⁹¹, “bushfallers”, “mbeng”, and “mbengis”.

Socio-economic hardship altered an education-oriented pattern of migration to an economic- oriented migration which was based on family wellbeing. In this new form of migration, individuals travel abroad to “huzzle”. In Anglophone Cameroon, this is described as bushfalling⁹².

⁹⁰Fondong, (2008), available online at Available online at: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BACDAMid-West/conversations/topics/98> (accessed 30.07.2015).

⁹¹Until date, no one knows the exact origin of the term bushfalling which gave rise to a subsequent term bushfaller. However, bushfalling is derived from the Pidgin English word of “black bush” which is a far-away farm where crops thrive. Also in a “black bush”, certain crops grow naturally which means one can return home with a good harvest despite not having worked so hard like the farms that are closer to the house. One can also hunt in the “black bush”; therefore the harvests from a “black bush” are always in abundance compared to farms close-by. At the same, Nyamnjoh and Page, (2002) maintains that Whiteman kontri (the developed world) is known in Cameroon as a place where economic opportunities in particular are believed to be plentiful. It therefore makes sense to think that it is this belief in abundance that gave rise to transnational migration to the West to be described as “bushfalling”—which means to fall bush to Whiteman kontri (the land of abundance, the bush where one can return home with a good harvest to feed the family).

⁹² One might consider bushfalling as one of the ways through which Africans, and Cameroonians in particular seek to grasp and maintain their ‘place-in-the-world’ (Ferguson, 2006). In *Global Shadows*, Ferguson maintains that Africans in a variety of social and geographical locations increasingly seek to make claims of membership within the global community. Such claims, he argues, demand new understandings of the global, centred less on transnational flows and images of

According to Fleischer, “*bushfallers* or *mbengist* refer to people travelling to the land of the whites for several years and return successful, i.e. with enough money to support the family, build a house, and set up a business” (2011: 76). That is to say “bushfallers” and “mbengis” are people who have migrated abroad and made-it.

Bushfallers are generally jobless university graduates, poorly paid civil servants (who perhaps are not in a position to make extra cash within their position or outside of it), bankrupt businessmen, politicians who have fallen out of favour, all forced to leave the country in search of better opportunities. Unlike the America Wandas, the main goal of bushfallers is to make money, to earn money. Like the true hunters that they are, bushfallers always endeavour to return home as often as they can, usually in December to show off their latest catch, be it a massive building project, an exotic business, and cars, to name a few (Fondong, 2008). Bushfallers make sure they ‘faroter’ (to spray hard money around in reckless abandon).

In Anglophone Cameroon, bushfalling has a broad meaning. Sometimes people can refer to other African countries such as South Africa as bush. For these people, bush is any country out of Cameroon where one goes to make money. Bush is a place where people go to help develop themselves and their family, it is the place you go for a better future (Alpes, 2011: 231-232). I got similarly

unfettered connection than on the social relations that selectively constitute global society and on the rights and obligations that characterise it. Talking about ‘mimicry and membership’ (chapter 6), Ferguson analyse a letter that was written by two Guinean boys who lost their lives trying to get to Europe. In the letter, they appealed to “members of Europe (to among other things) help us to become like you” (pg.20). From a cultural perspective, Ferguson writes that the North-South borders have indeed become porous but this porosity remains unchecked in relation to transnational [African] migration which is often met by real institutional and economic barriers from border police and passport control to economic difficulties that leads to *desperate migration* for many Africans (pg.165-166). Ferguson concludes that “such membership is understood to entail a set of claims to social and economic rights that go far beyond those associated with decolonisation and national-level political democracy. The young men who died on the plane are quite specific about what is required: education, health care, peace, food, children’s rights. Wanting “Europeans to help us become like you”...is a haunting claim for equal rights of membership in a spectacularly unequal global society” (pg. 174-175).

responses when I asked people in Cameroon what is bush and bushfalling. For many people, whether one is travelling for studies or otherwise, as long as the person has gone abroad and can make money to support him/herself and his/her family, that is bushfalling. Some informants in Cameroon, mostly youngsters told me: “Whether one is going to study or going to ‘huzzle’, all is considered as bushfalling because you are no longer like an ordinary man who hasn’t travelled, that is, who hasn’t boarded an airplane across the ocean”. In short, bushfallers are those who stay abroad, have built houses, and have investments in Cameroon. They come and visit and go. Some of them live both in Cameroon and abroad and they have many investments. One of my informants asserted that: “a bushfaller is someone who is coming from abroad and has made a lot of money. Those kind of guys that when girls see them, they get overwhelmed”. She added that “a bushfaller is anyone coming from abroad. It does not matter which country, it just means anyone coming from abroad”⁹³.

While bushfalling would generally refer to any country where one goes to make money, the term bushfaller is often applied to migrants from countries out of Africa (with the exception of South Africa). Therefore in this sense, one might consider migration to other African countries as gardenfalling not bushfalling; first because the social status ascribed to a Cameroonian migrant in an African country is not the same as a migrant in Northern countries. Secondly, salaries in Northern countries are generally higher than in other African countries and this has implication on migrants’ remittance patterns. For instance the amount of money a Cameroonian migrant receives as a cleaner in Gabon is lower than what another Cameroonian migrant who does the same cleaning job in Switzerland earns⁹⁴. I sum up this difference between bush and garden with a quote from an informant who noted that:

⁹³ See also Ngwa and Lydia, (2006).

⁹⁴ Ferguson, (2006: 166) asks that if we truly live in a global world of punctured borders as argued by the proponents of globalisation, then how is it that the most poorly paid workers in America earn at least fifty times the hourly wage earned by a comparable worker in Zambia?

“No, I won’t say that people who migrate to other African countries are in bush. This is gardenfalling not bushfalling because it is close to the house (the house meaning Cameroon)⁹⁵. It is the same people and the same problems that we have in Cameroon. You don’t see it on TV, you don’t see tall buildings from these places being shown on TV. In the bush, you go there and harvest what is already there, what is already available in the bush. But in the garden, you have to cultivate before you can harvest, you have to toil here and there, you have to plant before you can reap the fruits of your labour. Where as in bush, some stuff are already present like wild fruits, at least there is something. You don’t need to labour so much as you will do in a garden before you can reap from a bush. So you see, bush and garden are different...In gardens, you cannot study, work and take care of yourself and your family in Cameroon as you can do in bush”.

I got the same responses when I asked the question “qui sont les mbengis” in Yaoundé and Douala (Francophone Cameroon). I was told that les mbengis are those who live in the Northern countries— (“les pays de blancs” were the words used) and have made money and have investments including riding in big cars. With such understandings, I wanted to find out from my informants how they would defined someone who lives abroad, comes home for visit and goes back but do not have such investments. I took an example of myself and one of my informants responded that:

“People like you are not real bushfallers. These are the type of people that come to Cameroon and cannot even buy drinks for people or to “faroter”. For real bushfallers, you don’t need to be told, when you see them, you can identify by the way they look and how they dress. Especially those who have just arrived, their body is fresh and not cranky like some of us whose bodies have been damaged by excessive

⁹⁵ Since bushfalling comes from the word “black bush” which is a far away farm where crops thrive and one is sure to come back home with a good harvest, for my informant, other African countries especially those within the CEMAC region which is where some Cameroonians migrate to, would be considered garden not bush because the harvest from a garden is far less bountiful than what one would get from a bush/black bush.

sun and heat. Over there, only the cold is enough to make your body clean and smooth. For some, you can even identify by the way they talk, they have become Americana (with an American accent). Female bushfallers come with long human hair⁹⁶. These female bushfallers have the original human hair. Not the fake ones that we have here in the markets”.

One of my interviewees described to me what she thinks of herself when asked whether she was a bushfaller: “people say I am a bushfaller but I don’t consider myself to be one because I am below compared to others who are here. I see myself as someone who has to work hard. A bushfaller is someone who has built houses in Cameroon, owns a big car or cars, travels to Cameroon every year for visits, wear big brands of designers’ clothes and shoes. Nonetheless, people consider me a bushfaller because I can send them money and as long as I can do this, the rest is not important. You see, when real bush fallers come home, they drink mineral water and eat in big restaurants, they don’t buy ‘puff-puff’⁹⁷ along the road as we do”.

In Cameroon, not everyone considered me as a bushfaller. When I asked my relatives whether I was a bushfaller or not, I received mixed answers. For my nieces, nephews, and cousins, I was a bushfaller. But for my brothers, I was not a bushfaller, I was still studying (although they asked and still ask me for money) and that was the same thing they will tell people back home. For example, one of my brother’s friends called him and complained that he has been hiding from them because his bushfaller sister was around so he wanted to eat all the bushfaller goodies without sharing with them. My brother replied that, “no, she is not a bushfaller; she is just a student and has just come for her research”. His response was dismissed; rather his friend noted that “student or not-a-student is not the issue, the important thing is that she is coming from Whiteman kontri”. In another situation, I came across a neighbour

⁹⁶ Hair coming from mainly India, Malaysia, Brazil, and Peru. These are natural hair that has been weaved and sold and they are of various length ranging from 6 to 22inches

⁹⁷ Puff-puff is a Cameroonian snack/food made out of flour and deep-fried. In Francophone Cameroon, it is call beignets.

in a bus park⁹⁸. He complained that I came and has been hiding from people. I couldn't even buy drinks for people—"these our sisters in the quartier that come and hide away from us, can't even offer a bottle of beer, cannot even 'faroter'...na wah'oo" (were his exact words). I told him I have been very busy and have not really had time to visit everyone in the neighbourhood but any day he has time, he should stop at home and we can have drinks together. Another day, I also met up with a classmate of mine. We had not seen each other since 2007 but we communicated via Facebook. I didn't tell her I was coming to Cameroon.

So when she met me in a bus park, she was very annoyed that I didn't inform her of my coming and I tried to explained things to her. The next statement was that I should find her something, which means I should give her some money. I explained to her that I have just come for my research and I didn't have money, so I gave her 2000FCFA but she refused to take it and said: "How can you give me 2000, a whole bushfaller. You give me 2000 that what should an ordinary/normal person give me". I said that was all I could offer her but she refused so I kept the money back into my wallet. She was there with another girl and the girl immediately asked me to give her the money on behalf of my friend, since I was not close to her, 2000FCFA was ok because she didn't know me. I replied that I was not expecting to see her so I would give her something some other time. Then I turned to my friend and said I would come visit her another day.

Bushfalling fantasies

Like I said, the phenomenon of bushfalling is widely discussed in Cameroon. My interactions with migrants, their families, and aspiring migrants attest that almost everyone wish to fall bush. This is

⁹⁸ In Cameroon, a bus park is a bus station, where buses and taxis depart for various inter-city and intra-city destinations. These parks work in partnership with the Ministry of Transport and are controlled by the different municipalities. It is a meeting point of buses, and also taxis; hence it is also call a car park. These parks are also places for flourishing petty businesses, hawkers, bars, restaurants, to name a few. They are different from a parking lot also known as a car park which is an area, usually divided into individual spaces reserved for parking vehicles.

especially so amongst the young people. For example during my time in Yaoundé while on fieldwork in Cameroon, there was a telephone credit seller from whom I always bought credit for my phone. One afternoon as I went to his roadside kiosk to top up my phone, a car drove by; the driver was a young man in his late thirties (I suppose). It was a white jeep looking very new and clean. It still had foreign number plate, seems to be coming from United States of America, apparently from the state of Texas judging from the number plate of the car. My friend the phone credit seller who was a young man in his early thirties (I asked his age but he didn't tell me, he just said "I am more than 30 years old") looked at the car and exclaimed "*merde les mbengis vont nous tuer, regarde la voiture.*"⁹⁹ I asked him in French: how do you know he is a mbengis? "Are you not seeing his car"? he replied. And he continued that for anyone to drive that type of car here in Cameroon, it must be a "feyman", ("*un escroc*" was the word he actually used). This means a dealer, a scammer, or what Anglophones will describe as 4-1-9. "Even ministers now in Cameroon are afraid to drive very big cars because they will be accused of stealing states' money", he added.

As our discussion unfolded, a friend of his around the neighbourhood came in and joined in our conversation. I asked him whether he will like to go to mbeng. "Of course" he replied, (in a way that sounded as if I had been crazy to have asked such a question), "is there anybody here who will not like to go"? He asked. Then he continued that "I am here suffering, doing small-small jobs around plus running a call-box; if I had the means, I will go. I am saving my money because someone told me there is a '*réseau*' (a line) for Dubai, the money is 300, 000FCFA (about six hundred Swiss francs) excluding flight ticket. I am saving to go and see the person and from Dubai, I can then find my way out to other countries. I would love to go to France, Germany, Swiss, or Belgium. But to get visas for those countries when you are here in Cameroon is very difficult, almost impossible. If you go to the embassies of these countries to apply for visa, you are just wasting your time, they will never give you" he said.

⁹⁹ English translation: wow, these mbengis will kill us. Look at the car.

So what is mbeng for you and who is a mbengis, I asked him. This time, before he responded, his friend had already jumped in. “Mbeng is the land of the white man” (les pays des blancs), he said, “all the countries in Europe and America”, he added. “That means, France, Belgium, Germany, England, USA, Canada, even Japan and South Korea. And mbengis are all those Cameroonians who are staying there”. “You see like the guy who just passed here with that car, that is a mbengis” (his friend interrupted). “Those who come to Cameroon with cars, they have money, they have built houses, those who have travelled abroad and just come to Cameroon and go back. Those who stay and work abroad”. I then turned to the friend and asked, but you said you want to go to Dubai, so will you be considered a mbengis? “It depends, I can still be. It depends if I go there and succeed. There are people who only go to Dubai and buy things to come and sell, those are not mbengis, they are business people. Mbengis are those who don’t come back to stay, they stay there. So if I stay there and I succeed and I come back to Cameroon to visit, I will be a mbengis”.

So how will one defined a successful mbengis? I continued. “Like you see that guy who just passed with the car, that is a true mbengis (un vrai mbengis)” he replied. “There are some who just say they are mbengis but they have nothing to show. Some come here big time, they have money, they have built houses, they have things that they didn’t have before when they were in Cameroon”. But you know, there are some who stay there with no papers, so for this people, it is not easy, I noted (just to hear what they would say). “How do you know, have you been there”? He asked me. Without waiting to get a response from me, he continued that, “people just come here and start telling stories. Even if life is difficult there, I will still succeed.

There are those who go there and they succeed so why will I not succeed. We are seeing sometimes they show that people are dying in the sea when they want to go to Europe, but we are also seeing that there are many people succeeding, many. In short, those who die at sea, it is their bad luck”. He attended to a customer who had come to make a call. Then he turned to me and asked if I was Anglophone (I guess he must have figured that out from the way I spoke French). “Yes I am Anglophone”, I replied. “Where do you live, Buea, Limbe,

Bamenda”? “I used to live in Buea, but my parents are still there”. “So where do you now live”? “In Switzerland”, I replied. And added that, “I am a student and what we are talking about is exactly what I am researching for my thesis”. So he asked me if I will come back after my studies. I said yes I will, I will come and look for jobs in Cameroon. He gave me a surprise look and said, “You are not serious”. He paused and later added that, “well, maybe you have your connection here in Cameroon so you will easily get a job when you come”. I said, I don’t, I will come and search as the others do. “You are making a mistake”, he cautioned. Then he added, “Well, it depends. It is good for you” (he shrugged). Our discussion continued for up to an hour, having interruptions as other customers came to buy airtime and/or make calls.

Therefore for families and the wider community, a *real* mbengis or bushfaller is someone who has accumulated enough to come home ‘big’ and be ready to faroter not only to his families, but also to friends and neighbours.

‘Coming home big’: bushfallers ostentation

Encounters at Brussels and Douala airports

It is December, a chaotic month for travellers especially to travellers going to Africa. It was December 19th 2014 and I have just landed at Brussels airport from Geneva. At Brussels, there were Cameroonians from many other countries who were all connecting to the next Brussels airline flight to Douala. The passengers were so many, more than 500 passengers judging from the seats in the airplane and the waiting queue for passport check. A lady who was standing in front of me, stepped out of the queue to answer her phone. When she finished, she was on her way to take back her queue position and she stepped on my toe by mistake. And immediately she said sorry, then she started speaking to me in an American accent. She was dressed in a short sleeve shirt (tucked in), a pair of lee jeans, and a pair of white Nike sneakers. I didn’t hear her American accent when she answered her phone. “Which town in Cameroon are you going to?” she asked. “To Buea”, I replied. “Ok, cool” as she nodded, holding her American passport containing her boarding pass in her

hands. “And you, which town are you going to?” I asked. “I am going to Bamenda, I live in Los Angeles”, she replied. “Do you go home every year?” I asked. “No, this is the first time I am going home in 7 years. You know America is far, and it is expensive, it is not easy to go home like people who live in Europe”. As we discussed, her American accent is getting even more intense. “Where are you coming from?” she asked me. “From Switzerland”. Where? “Switzerland”, I repeated. So how long have you been in the US, I asked. “Oh, I have been there for more than 25 years. I worked as a state-registered nurse¹⁰⁰”. Before she could finish her sentence, one Cameroonian guy and his white American girlfriend walked pass us (I could tell their countries judging from their accents), and another guy is forcing his way to the front of the queue. This lady turned to me and said, “Look at this people, they will never change. Even when they have lived abroad they still have those crazy attitudes. They think this is Cameroon”? I smiled and said, “Maybe that was where he was standing before”.

This lady said to her friend Mary who was standing five people away from her: “Mary you see thing way this your people dem di do” (Mary do you see what your people are doing). Mary laughed and replied in pidgin, “Them no go ever change” (meaning: they will never change). Interesting how her accent switches depending on who she was talking to. When we spoke, I couldn’t even tell she could speak Pidgin English. We stood there and waited as people took their turns on the queue.

Another lady who was standing behind me got tired of standing and walked pass me to squeeze herself in a space in one of the airport seats that are usually reserved for disabled people. She was dressed in a pair of jeans which was three-quarter feet long, a tiny-sleeve top/blouse, holding a Louis Vuitton handbag, and playing a game on

¹⁰⁰ It is said that nursing is the preferred profession for Cameroonian migrants in the US. A friend of mine who was trained as an accountant and had a master degree in Business Management decided to change profession and enrolled for a bachelor program in nursing when he migrated to the US. He told me “Chris na nursing di sell for here, na why that wey all man di run do dey” (Chris it is nursing that sells here, that is why everyone is running into it).

her latest Samsung galaxy phone. She had weave¹⁰¹ (tissage in French, made of very long Brazilian hair that almost touched her buttocks). Her Gucci sunglasses were worn on her hair and her sandals of about 10cm high glitters around. Her gold jewellerys were also very noticeable. From her look, I guessed that she must be a French speaking Cameroonian, probably coming from one of the French speaking countries around Europe; and indeed it was the case. Not long after, another woman walked towards her and greeted her, and they spoke French. I figured out from their conversation that she was coming from Paris or from France because she explained to her friend that she didn't want to take air France this time around because the previous year, her luggage didn't arrive in time when she reached Paris. Her look exemplifies a typical bushfaller, and her weave is something very popular amongst young girls and in particular Francophone girls.

Then came my turn, I gave the police official my Swiss resident card and my Cameroonian passport. He looked at my passport, then my resident card. He checked my resident card, and looked at me, checked it again and looked at me the second time. "Is there any problem?" I asked. No response. Rather, he looked at the resident card again, turned it behind and then looked at me. After which he gave me my resident card and my passport and said thanks. The girl following me had a French passport and not even up to 5 seconds was spent on her passport. The same was true with the lady that was standing in front of me with her American passport. Boarding alone took more than two hours and finally we took off. This was not the first time I was experiencing this practice where my passport and/or resident card get scrutinized. Such practices only make me realized even more just how powerful passports are and how this influence migrants' transnationalism.

Arriving at the airport in Douala, I had decided that this time I will not pay any money to the custom officials at the airport. The last time I travelled to Cameroon in 2011, I had bought so many presents

¹⁰¹ Weave are artificial hair. These weaves vary in length and price depending on the quality. In Geneva, a 14inches natural Brazilian hair cost between 200-250CHF. It is so small that sometimes one is required to buy at least two packets to ensure a reasonable quantity.

for family and friends. In fact, one of my 23kg luggage was full of presents—shirts, sneakers, shoes, mobile phones (which I hid inside the shoes so that it would not be stolen when my bags were opened and checked by the custom officials). The custom official asked me to pay the sum of 20,000FCFA (about 40CHF) because according to him, he was not sure if the items were meant as presents. For him, maybe I had brought in the goods to sell so I had to pay a fee. And yes I understood his point; there was nothing to prove that the stuffs I had bought were just gifts for family and friends. So I paid the money he demanded. No receipt was issued; rather, right in my presence he gave 5000FCFA to his colleague. Seeing this, I decided that I would not be paying this time.

I had clothes, shoes, handbags, chocolates, mobile phones, to name a few. Some of these items were mine and others were stuff that some of my informants had sent to give to their families. The crowd at the airport in Douala was chaotic plus the heat and power shortage. We waited for more than half an hour before our luggage was delivered. And even during delivery, there was constant power shortage so the baggage distribution belt constantly stopped and then resumed. I took my bags and walked past the customs as fast as I could. When one of the custom officials stopped me, I lied that my bags have already been checked. Standing outside, one of my brothers and my friend who had come to pick me up were stuck because cars were only allowed up to a certain point. The young guy (one of the baggage carriers at the airport) who helped me carry one of my bags from the main entrance of the airport to the car park (a distance of about 100meters) asked me to pay him 5000FCFA. “Même si vous n’avez pas de franc CFA, vous pouvez payer en Euro, 10 Euros c’est bon¹⁰² ». « Non, je n’ai pas 10 Euros” (no, I don’t have 10 euros), I shouted. Then I took 2000FCFA from my brother and gave him. “Non, c’est très petit, non je ne prends pas. Si une mbengis comme vous me donnez 2000, les autres vont me donner combien?”

¹⁰² English translation: even if you don’t have FCFA, you can pay in Euros. 10 Euros is fine.

Non grande sœur, ça c'est pas juste"¹⁰³, he protested. I searched my wallet and found 3 Euros which was my change for a drink I bought at Brussels airport. So I gave him the 3 Euros plus the 2000FCFA and immediately he took off at the speed of light as we drove out of the airport.

We arrived Buea at about 1.20am and sitting in the living room were my other siblings, my dad, and one of our neighbors. My mum was in the village for a 'crydie' (funeral) and she was coming back the following day. The staple food from my ethnic group, achu¹⁰⁴ had been prepared by one of my sisters. She brought out the food and served it to all those present. I didn't go to bed that night until it was 3.am because I had to answer so many questions from one of our neighbors about life in bush and the weather. "How do you survive there in the cold? What kind of food do you people eat there? Do you people have achu there? Do you work farm there?" (to name a few). After my response to his many questions, he said: "Chris I am surprised that you still speak pidgin very well. I was thinking that by now you would have become an Americana"¹⁰⁵. Everyone burst into laughter. Then he added that, "and you still look the same, you haven't gained weight". I responded that bushfallers in Europe are not usually fat like Americanas. And we still speak the same. We are not like those who go to America and after one week, they have suddenly become Americanas; and we laughed. "They begin to rap", my brother added. "One cannot even hear what some of them are

¹⁰³ English translation: no, it is very little, I am not taking it. If a mbengis like you give me 2000, how much will others (non-mbengis) give me? No big sister, this is not just.

¹⁰⁴ Achu is pounded cocoyam eaten with a sauce that is made of palm oil and other local spices. It is the staple food for all the ethnicities that make up the Mezam Division of the North West region of Cameroon.

¹⁰⁵ A Pidgin English word for Cameroonians living in the US. In Anglophone Cameroon, to say someone has become an Americana means that the person pride him/herself in the American lifestyle by way of dressing, talking, to name a few. It can also be used in a slightly insulting way referring to a situation where someone is showing off e.g. "s/he is showing me Americana" means s/he is showing-off or she is pretending to be an American by the way a person talks, dresses, etc. In *Americanab*, Adichie, (2013) notes that in Nigeria, Americana is a pidgin word referring to Nigerians in the US who come home pretending to be Americans by displaying certain attitudes e.g. speech, eating, walking, dressing, to name a few.

saying”, my sister echoed. “But some of them just want to show that they are from bush. They just want to speak like that so that you know that they are from bush”, says my brother. “Na that show show dem” (meaning those who like to show off), my neighbour confirms. Then I recounted the story of the Cameroonian lady from America that I met at the airport in Brussels, and immediately my sister said: “these are the people who want to kill us with pride when they come home. They would want to be noticed”. My neighbour concluded that, “these attitudes just differ for people. Some people when they come, you cannot even tell that they are bushfallers. But some, only when they walk past, you must know that, that is a bushfaller passing. Aunty Chris like you, you no di show show...” (Aunty Chris like you, you don’t show off). Then I told them we will continue our conversation the next day that I was too tired and needed to rest. I said goodnight and left the living room.

Papisco prepares for departure

As mentioned above, December is the time when many bushfallers come home for Christmas. Some of them can easily be identified due to their ostentatious behaviour. They tend to exhibit a distinct lifestyle. They wear big sunshades, baggy trousers and t-shirt, have two or more sophisticated mobile phones, drive big cars and sport cars, to name a few. I came back from Cameroon in March 2015 and haven’t seen my friend Papisco in a while. Papisco has been living in Switzerland for 10 years, he travelled after his Advance Level certificate for a bachelor degree. After his studies, he worked as a sales person in a supermarket and later got an administrative job with the Ville de Genève. Papisco called me up for a drink the following weekend. I sat with him and we were having a drink and chatting in one of the bars in Geneva. Papisco ordered a beer and I ordered pineapple juice. “You don’t drink beer”? He asked. “No, I don’t take alcohol”, I responded. “I have never taken note that you don’t drink alcohol. Are you a born-again? Because you don’t look like one”, Papisco commented. I smiled and asked him, “How do born-again look like”? “I mean when you see some born-again, you can just tell immediately... It makes me wonder whether you are a real

Cameroonian”, he said. He added that, “it is rare to find Cameroonian girls who are not born-again Christians and they don’t drink alcohol. You girls are the type of girls we men desire to marry because you will not suck-out all our money”. I smiled and said “not really”. Papisco was to leave for Cameroon in December, it has been four years since he last went home. He was not only excited to meet his family, but anxious that he would have six weeks of ‘jarving’¹⁰⁶ with friends and girls. Papisco explained to me how he was preparing for his trip to Cameroon in December:

Chris, Cameroon will hear me this December. Those girls will know that a bushfaller is in town. You see me, I don’t talk, I don’t make so much noise, only my appearance and comportment, and girls will be falling for me. I am preparing to send my car by October, so it will arrive Cameroon by the time I get there. You know I haven’t been home for a while so I will need to live to the fullest. Here, one hardly ever has time to really ‘jarve’. I have some new clean Nike and Adidas sneakers that I just bought including my latest Samsung galaxy, some nice clean baggy shorts. I will be based in Limbe, but I have my projects in Yaoundé. I have some student residences that I am constructing so I will have to frequent Yaoundé to supervise it. See Chris, when I go, I will just inform my ‘petits frères’ in the quartier that ‘grand frère’ is around. Only when I pass, you will just know that someone has passed. The perfume that I will buy will be that which when you hug me, you will just want to continuously hold me tight. See Chris, this is how I will sit (Papisco adjusted his chair as he demonstrated how he will be sitting in beer parlours and in the midst of girls), then I will just place my phones on top of the table like this, together with my car keys and my Gucci sunshades. Not much talking, just a few words at a time. See, I will not even ask for their numbers, girls will be asking me to take their numbers... (We both laughed and I commented that “it means you will be one in town”). Papisco replied that I want that when I leave, people in the quartier will be saying that there was a bushfaller around...

It is exactly this bushfaller behaviour from people like Papisco which Matilda denounces because for her, it makes people in

¹⁰⁶ To ‘jarve’ is a pidgin slang similar to saying to enjoy life.

Cameroon feel inferior. During an interview with Matilda which was conducted a year before my outing with Papisco, Matilda noted that some girls in Cameroon are led to abandon their long-term boyfriends, for short-term flashy bushfallers. She stated that: “The way some bushfallers behave and some of the things they do just to lure girls is fascinating. And some girls don’t even think twice, because they know that he is a bushfaller, they can’t say no. They know that he has money or that at least, if she is lucky, it can be an opportunity for her to fall bush. And most of the times they just find out that these bushfallers just come to have fun with these girls and that’s all. You will see a girl abandons the boyfriend she has, just to date a bushfaller that will stay for just some few weeks. You will see that a girl will even abandon the boyfriend that was even considering marrying her just because she has seen a bushfaller. I think this is some kind of an inferiority complex that people create for themselves for no good reason”¹⁰⁷.

Papisco is not the only one who is anxious by how he will display his bushfaller status when he goes to Cameroon. I heard similar remarks from Cameroonian migrants when I was travelling home in December 2014. Due to a power shortage, we waited for about 40 minutes for our luggage to be distributed. While standing there and waiting, two guys (whom I will call James and John) that were standing near me said: “this mess in Douala is so annoying. They think I came here to waste my time, I came here to enjoy”. James turned and asked John: “so what are your plans”? John replied: “when I reach Bamenda tomorrow, I will just rest, shower and then head out. I will be lodging at Ayaba hotel. I came here to enjoy, I didn’t pay my flight all the way from America to come and sit at home. I already have so many invitations in line. Plus my petite soeur has arranged an outing with her friends. We will go for drinks and afterwards go clubbing. Where will you be? You can join us”. James happily accepted the invitation and gave the phone number of one of his brothers to John saying: “take this number, once you get a

¹⁰⁷ On March 26th 2016, there were information circulating on local media stations in Buea as well as on social media about an 18-year-old Buea University girl who drugged a bushfaller in a hotel room and went away with his money and passport. The girl was caught a few days later.

Cameroon sim card, just call me”. “Ok fine, thanks”, said John. He continued that: “man, we have to make the best out of this little time that one has to be here”. “That is why I didn’t come with my family” James interrupted; “beside the fact that it is expensive for all of us to come home, I will not have enough time to rest. I just want to relax myself”. They both laughed as they walk up to the other end of the baggage belt to check for their luggage.

This status display of bushfallerness is best captured by Dymian in his Facebook post. He writes that: “... some bushfallers want to speak in foreign accents, in particular American accent especially in the presence of young girls. They live in hotels and party from one night club to the next. There is a general expectation in Cameroon that as bushfallers, one must dress in a particular way, sometimes with designer’s clothing...” In line with Dymian’s claims, it is a common fact that, a bushfaller has to distinguish him/herself at least by way of dressing. For example a friend of mine explained to me that when s/he went home for visit, s/he was criticized for not dressing like a bushfaller.

Nyamnjoh, (2000) and Nyamnjoh et al, (2002) studies confirm that modernity in Cameroon is associated with consuming western goods; from hair related products, to clothes, furniture, as well as education. In this quest for a modern lifestyle, hair in particular for Cameroonian women is a status symbol. One of the ways female bushfallers distinguish themselves is by wearing long original ‘human hair’. One of my informants confirms that, female bushfallers always have the ‘original’ human hair. A cousin of mine asked me when I was leaving, to bring her human hair next time I come to Cameroon. The one a friend of hers brought has worn out and she wanted a new one: “it was really one of the original ones, I have used it for over three years and it is still fine, just that it is old now so I need to change it”, she said. Nyamnjoh et al note that: “hair is of course part of this self-fashioning. It is particularly amenable to an investigation of how women are able to remake themselves repeatedly modern in their sensibility of consuming modes of being-in-the-world and to an examination of how differently economically positioned women respond to the allure of modernist, globally situated, imagination”. Hairstyles are made to suit the different occasions and also vary

depending on the income level of the consumer. The prestige attached to ‘human hair’ is so important that it puts the ‘human hair’ consumer at a higher level than a low brand type of wig consumer, for example a Nina wig (2002: 110, 112-113, 115)

These societal expectations of dressing and the ostentatiousness of Cameroonian bushfallers are reminiscent of Macgaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) studies on the *sapeurs* of Congo. They maintain that *sapeurs* are people who flaunt their appearance by wearing expensive fashionable clothing. Sapeur comes from the French word “sape” which means nice clothes and sapeur is a person that dresses up nicely. Later, sapeur was developed by Bazzavillois youths into an acronym for Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (SAPEURS). By publicly displaying ostentatious French designer clothing in their local communities, these young men earned social status and respect.

However, not all mbengis adopt this ostentatious behaviour, and such attitudes are also gendered¹⁰⁸. For example in a conversation with one Cameroonian in Sweden, I explained to him that I would not adopt such bushfaller lifestyles when I go home. I would be my ‘authentic’ self. In response, he had this to say:

“You know for you women it is different, especially you this Anglophone girls. But I like Francophone girls, they know how to ‘jarve’. When most female bushfallers, go home, they stay at their parents or their husband’s houses and other family members and friends come to visit them with food, most often cooked food. But for us men, we need to go out, to hang out with friends, and enjoy life with girls...At least it is a time to relax and to enjoy the hard work of all the suffering that one is going through here in Europe” (field notes).

Bushfallerness also relates to certain rituals/celebrations. It is common to hear people talk about a bushfaller wedding and a ‘normal’ wedding, a bushfaller funeral and a ‘normal’ funeral, a bushfaller birth celebration and a ‘normal’ birth celebration. The very

¹⁰⁸ Not only are these attitudes gendered but they differ for Anglophones and Francophones. The latter tend to be more ostentatious. Anglophones are often stigmatised as being backward.

fact of describing the latter as ‘normal’ means that the bushfallers are ‘extra normal’ or better still extra-ordinary¹⁰⁹. These forms of mannerisms entail certain expectations from both the family and the wider community that is associated with defining who is a *real* mbengis, and how s/he has to behave including how s/he is supposed to dress. It is not uncommon to hear people in the neighbourhood comment that s/he does not dress or behave like a bushfaller.

Nonetheless, while Papisco and other Cameroonian migrants are blessed with the ability to travel home wherein their ostentatious behaviour will be recognised, other Cameroonians do not enjoy the same privilege. Whether for financial reasons or due to a lack of the required papers to travel (in the case of undocumented migrants), these persons have devised alternative ways to showcase their ‘bushfallerness’. Social networks, in particular Facebook has become a powerful means through which migrants’ realities are presented.

“Bush is like heaven and Cameroon is like hell”: Facebook images and perceptions/interpretations of a good life

Facebook has become one of the mediums through which migrants connect with their families back at home. In these active online interactions, migrants post photos on Facebook that usually convey messages of a good life in bush. Due to the increasingly importance of Facebook in making the world a ‘global village’, a number of authors have studied it from a variety of perspectives including in relation to how it affects migrants’ lives. As Miller, (1995) maintains, there are local perspectives of modernity and “modernity is an embodied sensation” (Appadurai, 1996). Thus the world in which we live in is one in which modernity is decisively at large, irregularly self-conscious, and unevenly experienced. He writes that:

“Electronic media give a new twist to the environment within which the modern and the global often appears as flip side of the same coin... These media nevertheless compel the transformation of

¹⁰⁹ See chapter 7 where I have examined this representation of bushfaller birth and death celebrations in greater details.

everyday discourse. At the same time, they are sources of experiments with self making in all sorts of societies, for all sorts of persons... Because of the sheer multiplicity of the forms in which they appear (cinema, television, computers, and telephones) and because of the rapid way in which they move through daily life routines, electronic media provide resources for self-imagining as an everyday social project” (1996: 2, 3-4).

Appadurai, (1996: 4) makes the case that, when migration, be it voluntary or forced migration is juxtaposed with mass media images, we end up with varied production of modern subjectivities. In Appadurai’s sense, Facebook as an example of electronic media, has become a means through which people publicly display their taste of a modern life. For Cameroonian migrants, this takes the form of taking pictures and posting them on Facebook with comments such as “ahead-ahead”, “higher-higher”, “counting my blessings”, “bushlife”, “welcome to bush=bye-bye to poverty”, “enjoying the summer or summer fun” to cite a few. Photos are carefully selected to convey the message intended by the author. Just seeing the photos posted, the conclusion at least from those back at home is that life in bush is paradise and this has implication for even greater bushfalling aspirations from those at home.

What makes Facebook even more interesting to an anthropologist is its importance to convey messages through virtual imagery. This means that in personal and social life, the internet, through its virtual capacity, allows ideals of social relations to be realized on an expansive communicative terrain (Miller and Slater, 2000: 172). Thus images reveal insight that is not accessible through any other means (Banks, 2007: 4).

Being friends on Facebook can deepen and/or replace the time and co-presence necessary to sustain face-to-face relationships offline” (Mckay, (2010: 480)¹¹⁰. In *Tales of Facebook*, Miller (2011)

¹¹⁰ Mckay, (2010: 480) writes that: “The “friends” relationship on Facebook can symbolize and extend previous or newly formed offline relationships, or mark a completely new relationship between previously unacquainted persons. Online “friends” might be offline romantic partners, siblings, children, neighbors, colleagues, school mates, clients, contacts made on holidays and so on.

describes how it has become like a home for Trinidad migrants in the UK. As a home, it exacerbate quarrels and tensions, leading to people being accused of witchcraft and/or cropped out of photographs (Miller, 2012: 155). In his thesis on Facebook and migration, he makes the case that instead of considering Facebook and other Social Networking Sites (SNS) as simply means to communicate between two localities e.g. between migrants and their families at home, it is important to think of these sites as places in which people in some sense actually live. This will allow us to understand how people use these sites as spaces for ‘interior decoration’; that is as a means to publicly decorate their life’s activities (2012: 155-156).

For Oiarzabal, (2013: 1478-1479) Facebook is a medium through which migrants create and maintain their social capital. In addition, it helps connects new migrants to old migrants, which can be helpful for new migrants to get information on jobs. Jackson, (2014: 59-68) in her study of Cameroonian migrants in Cape Town (South Africa) noted a similar observation in terms of how Facebook can be used for the formation and maintenance of social capital. To these migrants, Facebook is a means to represent their ‘worldliness’/ostentatiousness¹¹¹.

Taking pictures inside, beside, or in front of cars and posting them on Facebook is a common habit among Cameroonian migrants especially those in the United States. For these migrants, cars are like “children”; doubtless many of them refer to their cars as “my baby”. A Facebook friend of mine who lives in the US bought a new car, a Toyota Rav 4 and took a photo with the plastic protection still on the seats of the car. Then she posted pictures on Facebook with the title “my new baby”. Some of the comments that followed included: “your new baby is good”, “wow! I can see that it is just from the manufacturer”, “higher-higher level my sis”, “your money has started showing”, “America fine time no dey” (loosely translate as America is good), “life is good”, “to God be the glory sis I can see that He is blessing you”, to name a few. A few days later, I was talking with another friend of mine in the US, and she told me she has just bought a new car, “I mean it is not really new, kind of second new but it is

¹¹¹ See also Uimonen, (2013).

really good”, she said. She gave me the name of the car to check on Google, and later that day, she sent me some photos of the car. “You Americanas will kill us with cars”, I said. She laughed, and replied “here you need a car Chris. It is not like there in Europe where you can just go take a bus, train, or use your bicycle, or even walk. Here in America, cars are necessities”, she reiterated. “It means very soon I will be seeing photos on Facebook with your ‘new baby’”, I joked. We both laughed and then she said:

“Those who like to show off with their cars are those who are coming from Cameroon. Not for people like us that have lived in Europe. You know in Europe, to have a car is nothing. But in Cameroon, to have a good car is something, it is everything. It tells you are rich, that you are living a good life. So it is that same mentality they bring here to America. And you see, many of them go and take loans to buy those cars just to put it on Facebook. For these children, I call them children coming from Cameroon because they are still very childish, they really haven’t civilized. For them, America is like paradise on earth. I am not saying that America is not good, I mean compared to Europe, for me, I will say America is good because here I can have a clean job where I work normal time and not the type of odd jobs we black people do in Europe amidst our qualification. If you want to look at what these people coming from Cameroon are doing, it is as if having a car means that you have arrived! They are the ones that go and take very big cars on loans just to show off. I am not in that nonsense!”

My friend’s statement shows that even within the Cameroonian migrant community, there is a difference between migrants coming from Cameroon and those migrants who lived in other developed countries before re-locating to other countries. The former are considered ‘childish’ and still super excited about bush. It is this category of migrants for whom bush is heaven and Cameroon is hell. For example the cousin of a friend of mine who is 19 years old won the DV lottery and went to America, compares Cameroon and America in the following words: “America is like heaven and Cameroon is like hell fire. America is like day and Cameroon is like the night. Look at little me, I can be able to work and earn real money,

and own a good car at this my little age where as if I was in Cameroon, I would never dream of living such a life. I thank God for this DV lottery”. While it is true that salaries in US are higher, what is even more evident is how these migrants express this newly achieved status, that is, the status of bushfallers/mbengis as people who are living a good life. Despite any difficulty these migrants might face, at the end of the day, bush is considered heaven. Consequently, almost everyone in Cameroon wants to go.

In another situation, this time in Cameroon I was standing at the counter of Express Union to send money to one of my cousins who called me complaining that I didn’t bring any present for her. As I was filling in her details in the form, there was a young man beside me who was discussing with one of the staff, probably his friend. I will name them as Patrick and Timothy. “Do you know that Enow is in Dubai”, Patrick told his friend Timothy. “Really, when did he go”? Timothy asked. “Just last week”; Patrick replied. Then he continued: “and you will not imagine what happened. Only one week that Enow has been in Dubai, he called me this morning and asked, *ma man* how pays (*my man* how is the country; pays as in the French word for country)”. They both laughed complaining that Enow has not even stayed a month and he is asking how the country is as if he has been in Dubai for years. Then Patrick continued that: “he only wanted to show that he is in bush. Have you seen his photos on Facebook?” he asked his friend Timothy. “No”, he replied. “Please go and check, it seems that in that country they don’t have normal houses like we do here, they only have very tall storey buildings, I mean very tall. He told me his roommate has a car, because I saw him posing inside a very nice car and he said it is his roommate’s”. “*Ma man e* mean say that place find-oh (*my man* it means that, that place is good-oh)” Timothy commented. “Yes”, Patrick confirmed, and then he said. “Never ever listen to people who tell you Europe¹¹² is hard”. “Europe is hard but they are still there”, Timothy echoed. “I tell you”, says Patrick. Then he added that: “this type of people just want to discourage others. *My man*, Europe is good let no one lie to you. I told Enow that once he gets a job we can do a car business; he

¹¹² Enow’s friends don’t distinguish between Dubai and Europe. All is bush for them.

can be sending me cars to sell here. You know in Europe cars are very cheap. Enow said he will do that... My man the truth is that after everything Europe is the best. Just give Enow two weeks; you will see how he will be looking fresh. Only the way he is shining in the photos he just posted on Facebook, it means that by the time he stays there for few months, he will be looking very fresh". "Money de dey how e no fresh (there is money there why will he not look fresh). We are here; anyhow, we shall get there one day", Timothy assured. "You have said it all", Patrick confirms.

Photos create varied realities. Just from seeing his photos on Facebook, Enow's friends have already concluded that he is enjoying himself, that life in Europe is the best. It is often said in Cameroon that the cold in Europe makes bushfallers 'fresh'. Dubai for Enow's friends is Europe if not geographically, then at least by virtue of being bush/mbeng. Thus Facebook play and have played a role in structuring our social worlds, including imagining a future in bush for aspiring Cameroonian migrants.

Yet these online expressions of the self sometimes instigate jealousy, quarrels, and these tend to strain offline relationships¹¹³. For instance an informant noted that: "at first I used to accept friend requests from many people, but some people when they become your friends, they start to post silly comments on your Facebook pictures. Some of them even go as far as to start telling you their problems indirectly, asking you for money. I had a classmate like that. I accepted her friend request, and then she started commenting on my pictures and then one day I got a message from her that she was really broke and that I should fine her 'small-thing' (meaning I should send her some money). I sent her money¹¹⁴, a few months later, she still sent me another message. And it was from there that I just blocked her from my Facebook".

¹¹³ Miller, (2012) observed the same adverse offline Facebook effect on migrants' interaction in the case of Trinidad migrants in the UK.

¹¹⁴ I have used the terms 'occasional help' to describe this random financial helped to people at home. The usage of 'occasional help' is inspired by Mazzucato (2008: 101) thesis on 'occasional helpers' defined as those migrants who by virtue of their economic and legal condition do not send remittances quite often. They tend to send when the need arises. See chapter 8, section 8.6 for a broader analysis.

Similarly, although my informant Cynthia is living undocumented in Switzerland, in the eyes of her friends, she is living big, she is enjoying herself. On Cynthia's Facebook profile, it says that she works as a bank director in Switzerland and she attended university of Buea. Cynthia had posted a picture on Facebook and I commented. Going through the other pictures, there was one in which she was well dressed in black blazer and a skirt, a pointed 7cm cover shoes and a nice handbag. This photo attracted 56 likes and 36 comments on the day I commented. Some of the comments (which were mostly in pidgin but translated here into English) include: "wow, mum you look good, you are made in the apple of the lord". "I can see that your money is flowing", "yes madam, bush is good". "Who say bush is not good see the way you are glowing; please remember us and send us a bit of that your enjoyment".

When I saw that Cynthia's status says that she was a bank director, I asked her jokingly saying "madam director won't you take me out this weekend"? She laughed and replied, "Director? I claim it Christy, it means my blessings are on the way. That means I will be a director one day". I said that it was what was written on your Facebook page. She laughed and said, "But Chris you know I am not. That is just Facebook. Maybe that is why people are asking me for money all the time because they think I am a director". We both laughed and I said "but you are the one who wrote it". Then she said, "Anyway I won't take it out. Rather I will claim it in Jesus' name", Amen (I responded). One of my interviewees remarked that: "Sometimes people see your pictures on Facebook and they go and gossip to your parents. They will go and say I have seen Estelle's pictures on the internet, she is really doing well. She is fine. So when your people hear this and you tell them you don't have money, how will they believe you?" he asked.

When these random-online demands emerged, migrants start to carve out their network of friends through different strategies— to unfriend, to block friends, or not to accept friends' requests. A friend told me that as a strategy to limit those who can contact him online, he has designed his Facebook profile in such a way that no one can send him a friend request. He can send a request, but others can't reciprocate. We laughed as he explained this to me. When I asked

him why he does this, he said: “with this Facebook, people are just out there to bug people’s lives. So instead of me having problems with someone because s/he sends me a friend request and I didn’t accept, or that I blocked or unfriend them, it is better I don’t let them contact me in the first place”, he concluded.

Similarly, a friend of mine refused to send money to her sick uncle whose son is in the US. In explaining to me why she refused, she said: “I cannot be sending him money all the time while his son is there in America riding in big cars, partying from left to right with girls and cannot take care of his father. Every day he is posting new pictures on Facebook displaying his material wealth. He cannot take care of his father, leaving him to be bugging my life, me too I don’t have money” (with a tone of dissatisfaction and anger as she wraps up her sentence).

The statements above enable us to see how photos posted on Facebook which might just be for fun can lead to unintended consequences such as people asking for money or creating a feeling that the authors of these photos (the migrants) are living in paradise. One might still be living in bush and face difficulties, and sometimes what people show on the photos does not reflect the reality. As an informant noted: “my dear, don’t believe all these things you see on Facebook. He can be posting those pictures like that but it does not necessarily mean that he has money. It might be just to show-off. Or maybe he took all those things on credit...for me, those things don’t move me at all”, she said. It is worth mentioning that because families can’t decipher what is going-on on Facebook and tend to take everything at face value, it is hard for them to believe that not everything is fine across the ocean. It is these perceptions of bush as an Eldorado that sometimes instigate demands for ‘occasional help’—families and friends wanting their share in the wealth shown on Facebook as well as increasing the desire to fall bush for others.

“Kontri don spoil”: popular discontents and Cameroonian transnational migration

The underlying question here is why do Cameroonians want to go to mbeng? Many in Cameroon make the case that the present

economic conditions have resulted to dashed hopes for a future and hence one of the major reasons for out migration¹¹⁵. Yet, many still argue that the entire system is so corrupt and this is having a negative effect on majority of the population. As a result, there have been national demonstrations such as the 2008 national protest and recently the March 2016 protests denouncing the social ills that are eating badly into the fabric of the Cameroonian society. Some have resorted to singing, that is, they composed pieces of music that describe and condemn the social ills of corruption, nepotism and tribalism, embezzlement, to name a few. Some have even gone far to accuse France as being responsible for the present economic malaise in Cameroon. As one professor in Cameroon explained, “unless Cameroon in particular and francophone Africa in general cut-off from the colonial chains of serving the master, this country will only become worse”. I wouldn’t go further into this theme of colonialism, nonetheless these societal discontents are the explanations Cameroonians give when they say “this kontri don spoil” (this country has spoiled, became bad/very difficult).

Transnational migration is widely discussed in Cameroon, from the neighbourhoods to the street vendors, in car parks, in the public and private media, amongst the educated and non-educated, to name a few. Everyday complaints by Cameroonians show a country with a scarcity of socio-economic opportunities for many and this is often cited as the principal reason explaining why many young Cameroonians have resorted to transnational migration.

In this subsection, I revisit some of the claims made by many Cameroonians who argue that a future in Cameroon is nothing but

¹¹⁵ Nonetheless it can also be argued that the problem in Cameroon is not economic constraints but the problem of re-distribution given that a very small percentage of the population own and control a great portion of the country’s resources. Thus the country’s economic growth is not reflected in the livelihood for many Cameroonians who still live on less than a dollar a day. For instance World Bank 2015, estimates Cameroon economic growth at 5.1 percent in 2015 while the Cameroon government estimated 6.2 percent economic growth for the same year (<http://crtv.cm/fr/latest-news/economie-3/world-bank-cameroon-at-5-1-economic-growth-rate-in-2015-13801.htm>, accessed 28.03.2016). Despite this economic growth rate, many in Cameroon still lack the basic facilities of food, health, and shelter.

an impossibility. Amongst the Cameroonian migrants I have worked with during my master degrees and PhD studies, including the time I worked as a research assistant in a similar project on transnational Cameroonian migration to Europe, I haven't come across any Cameroonian migrant for whom migration was a choice and not a necessity. But to think that migration is the one and only path to success for Cameroonian youths will be overlooking the realities of those trapped in impossibilities for mobility. Those young Cameroonians for whom access to transnational mobility remains blurred, have tend to devise various survival strategies such as riding commercial motor-bikes known in Cameroon as 'bendskin' (Konings, 2006) or driving a taxi, or engaged in money counterfeiting (Mokake, 2013), carrying out petty business, become hawkers, and so on.

The theme of transnational migration is so widely discussed that it has increasingly been occupying public debates in the country. For example in 2007, the Cameroon chapter of the US-based African Renaissance Ambassador Corporation (ARA) organized a series of debates with a competition across secondary schools in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon on the theme: *Bushfalling is not the African Dream*. The winner of the debate received a cash prize of 400 thousand FCFA and was to be part of a delegation to the United Nations sponsored African summit in New York in June 2008. Those who argue against bushfalling made the case that Cameroonians and Africans can realize their dreams in Cameroon and Africa and not abroad while those who argue for, said that bushfalling is the African dream due to poverty and unemployment. As one of the students puts it, "I will be glad to be part of the bushfalling programme. I dream of leaving Cameroon one day". At the end of an article that was published on The Postnewline in December 2007 following this debate, commentators argue that bushfalling still remains the dream for many Cameroonians because they feel that there is no future in the country. One of the commentators, Nada, wrote:

"There is a marked difference between myth and reality. Those people who are against the so called bushfalling are probably those with

most of their kids in Europe and America. Why would someone come to a country where there is no hope? Why should someone come to a place where the future is bleak? A country that does not respect fundamental human rights. A country where the old never wants to listen to the young, a place where no one wants to retire. It's a shame that most Cameroonians go away and never want to come back. Give them the chance and let them implore their good education to develop that country and stop talking thrash. Some of you saying bushfalling is bad have reduced your ages to stay in service¹¹⁶ hence leaving no chance for prosperous (young) Cameroonians who have a lot to offer. Let's be honest to ourselves and stop living a life which lacks reality".

Sabi shares the same view as Nada; s/he maintains that having a debate amongst students in Cameroon proves the need for transnational migration. Sabi wrote that:

"I think the very fact that such a debate is being held only strongly signifies that there is need to go abroad. If there wasn't any need for that, then there wouldn't have been any debate at all...So let anybody who deems it necessary and financially fit go and try his/her luck abroad. Cameroon is a mess. Change can only come to that county from outside-in"¹¹⁷.

This wide societal discontent that has resulted to many Cameroonian youths resorting to bushfalling as a way to cope have also been taken up by some Cameroonian musicians who, through their songs, invoke "the problem with Cameroon" and therefore call on the state officials to make way to 'clean up the country'. In a study on music and social change in Africa, Thorsen, (2004: 10) asserts that social change which is the potential for development interacts with, and takes shape with the tool of music.

Thorsen (2004) thesis on music as a tool for social change in Africa applies to some of the songs by Cameroonian musicians notably the songs of Longue-Longue (*examen de conscience*), Lapiro de

¹¹⁶ In Cameroon some civil servants reduce their age in order to delay retirement.

¹¹⁷ The Postnewsline, December 2007

Mbanga (*demissionnez!*), and IPP-Awillo (*kontri don spoil*). While the former two musicians are very popular in Cameroon, the later remains very popular particularly in Anglophone Cameroon especially because his songs are mostly sung in Pidgin English. I revisit the song *kontri don spoil* by Awillo¹¹⁸ to present an example of the way Cameroonians, and in particular the youths feel about their country and its implication for out migration.

To begin with, I will write out the text of the song in its original form and provide a translation through a content analysis of the song. Some of the words in this song do not have direct English translation. However, I provide a near translation for each of the different sections in the song in the paragraphs below¹¹⁹.

E mama ye kontri don spoil, e mama ye kontri don spoil. Who spoil-am, who go fix-am... This kontri get fever. Mbere dem don turn na clando driver for mboko here... Mona policier dem alias faire bien la voiture, tu me don mes cinq cents comme réglé...

[Hey mum this country is bad, who spoiled it, who will fix it... This country has fever, (that is, this country is sick, it has got fever, and rhetorically meaning it is so difficult...). The forces of law and order have become private taxi drivers... Policemen are only interested in receiving 500FCFA...]

In these lyrics, Awillo is denouncing the policemen who stop cars on the road to collect 500FCFA. Usually this takes the form of checking whether a car has all the relevant documents and whether it is in good shape. Most of the time, when a car is stopped, the policeman does not even bother to look at the documents.

¹¹⁸ Kah, (2015) cited this same song to make the case that “the Anglophone Problem” which is the marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroonians is rooted in the structural discrimination in favour of certain Francophone ethnic groups, especially those from the same ethnic group as the current president Paul Biya. They are also often appointed as head in control of major finance institutions such as the Ministry of Finance.

¹¹⁹ Awillo, IPP. Kontri don spoil: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOYnakSXLzo> (accessed, 2015.07.20). The song is sang in Pidgin English mixed with French. Awillo’s style of music is called makossa.

Sometimes when drivers are stopped, they do not give their car documents, but money to the policemen. I asked a driver once when we were stopped in a public transport bus why he was going to see the policeman empty handed, that is without his car documents. The driver replied: “you think they want to see documents? They are hungry, they want to eat, and they want money. Instead of staying here, wasting my time, it is better I just go give them what they want and I go”.

Ndefi Pius, Mokake dem no fit play again, if wona want for play wona change birth certificate for Mbarga Ndefi Pius, Onana Atangana Marcus Mokake before wona fit comot for banc de touché.

[Ndefi Pius, Mokake¹²⁰ and all the likes cannot play again in the national team. If you want to play, you should change your birth certificate to Mbarga Ndefi Pius, Onana Atangana Marcus Mokake before you can be placed on the reserved bench (in the list of extra players)].

In these lyrics, Awillo revisit the issue of the “Anglophone problem” which is the marginalization of the Anglophones by the majority Francophones. Mbarga, Onana, Atangana are names of people from the Centre region (Francophone Cameroon) and the region of origin of the current president Paul Biya. Awillo says in these lyrics that access to position, power, and resources for many Cameroonian youths and especially the Anglophones still remain a nightmare. In this situation, people have adopted several strategies to fit-in; one of which is a change of name. Fjellman and Goheen, (1984) also demonstrates in their study that a change of name in the Bui Division of Cameroon, (and by extension to other regions of Cameroon) facilitates access in both the public and private realm with regards to services, resources, as well as certain spaces. This practice of changing names could also be related to the Cameroon policy of regional balance, a strategy which demands that citizens from all the 10 regions of Cameroon should be represented in Cameroon’s public service.

¹²⁰ Ndefi Pius and Marcus Mokake were the only Anglophone players in the Cameroonian national football team around the years 2002-2008/2010

Le Cameroun des grandes ambitions, vraiment la corruption, discrimination e don kill we pass. If you no get godfather na for your own risk...

[Cameroon of great ambitions; truly corruption, discrimination have killed us. If you don't have a 'godfather', it is at your own risk...]

The slogan "Cameroun des grandes ambitions" was launched by President Paul Biya in his inaugural speech in the national assembly in 2004 while taking up his 4th term of office (from 2004-2011). In that inaugural speech, he reiterated the major actions that would be taken during the new seven-year period to ameliorate the economic situation in Cameroon. He called on Cameroonians to be mindful that the challenges would not only be to boost the economy but also to set up new and medium-term objectives according to a well-defined road map¹²¹. But for Awillo and for many Cameroonians, these catchwords were nothing but a political propaganda flawed with corruption, discrimination, nepotism—the phenomenon of 'godfather' where one needs to know someone at the top in order to get a service.

Kontri wey youth no get age limit... Université de Buea e no get future again. You comot dey with kind kind diplome de sortie na for your own risk. If you be nga alors call box di wait you. If you be manpekin benskin union alias welcome to Nanfang motorcycle... Eh mama kontri don spoil...who go fix-am. Papa and

¹²¹ For example in 2011, the government launched a program to recruit 25000 youths across the different sectors in Cameroon. In addition, following the increase in the prices of domestic gas, the prime minister in 2014 signed a decree increasing the minimum salary from between 23-24000FCFA to 36.270FCFA a month (about 70 Swiss Francs), in order to give more purchasing power to Cameroonians vis-à-vis the increased cost of living. However, such measures were interpreted by many Cameroonians to be a result of a national protest in February 2008 which almost resulted into a civil war as there were massive confrontations between the police and the population leading to the death of hundreds of mainly young people. In his television and radio address to the nation following the protest, the president noted that those who instigated the protest were members of the opposition parties, he describe them as "les apprentis sorciers qui ont manipulé les jeunes" (witchcraft apprentices who have manipulated the youths). The speech is available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKJwjqrRiUA> (accessed 01.04.2016).

mami dem wona don fool we. Wosite the future for this kontri e de? Wosite wona don leave-am? Pekin dem no get future again. Wona no di shame?

[A country where youths have no age limit... University of Buea has no future. If you graduate with various degrees, it is at your own risk. If you are a girl, then you are into call box. If you are a boy, then welcome to the commercial motorbike riders also known as Nanfang motorcycle union¹²²... Fathers and mothers, you have fooled/deceived us¹²³. Where is the future of this country? Where have you kept it? Children have no future. Are you people not ashamed?].

In these lyrics, Awillo began by describing Cameroon as a country where the youths have no age limit. He is actually referring to the fact that people change their date of birth to stay in civil service after the age of retirement, simply because they know someone at the top (and hence can easily forge papers) and because they don't want to retire. He says that, earning university degrees nowadays seem almost unworthy as we have seen that some female university graduates end up in call-box¹²⁴ businesses while male graduates might end up as commercial motorbike riders known as les

¹²² Nanfang Motorcycles is a Chinese large-scale modernised motorcycle manufacturer and exporter. It is specialised in the research and development of various motorcycles, engines, and tricycles. The Nanfang Motorcycle union which Awillo talks about in his song refers to the Association of Commercial Motorbike Riders in Cameroon.

¹²³ Fathers and mothers here are used in a metaphorical sense referring to the leaders of the country.

¹²⁴ Call-box are local telephone booths that are managed by individuals with special business subscription from the local telephone companies. Unlike self-service phone booths in Europe, Call-boxes in Cameroon operate as businesses managed mostly by the youths, especially young girls. It is a business that came up with the invention and extensive usage of mobile phones in Africa. For further information, see de Bruijn et al, (2009) whose studies demonstrate how mobile phones have become the new talking drums of everyday Africa. Ojong, (2016: 302) writes that Call-box business is more convenient for women due to the flexibility; meaning that these call-boxes are often close to where these women live and hence allow them time to carry out their house chores and motherly activities. Their incomes remain low and unpredictable. It has flourished to what he describes as "mobile economy" especially because nowadays, university students can pay their school fees through mobile money and residents in the major cities of Yaoundé and Douala can pay their property tax through MTN or Orange Cameroon mobile money services (pg.302-303).

“bendskinaires”. Konings, (2006: 47,49) confirms that riding ‘bendskin’ (Cameroonian slang for commercial motorbike) is a strategy adopted by the youths who have been faced with dramatic changes in the Cameroon labour market making it difficult to access jobs. In Konings’ sense, ‘bendskin’ riding is an economic strategy adopted by the Cameroonian youths to cope in a state in crises. He writes that beside the fact that bendskins provide a form of transport well adapted to the poor state of roads in Cameroon and the low incomes of many Cameroonians, it also stimulates growth in the local economic activities. In particular, it offers employment and a secure income to many Cameroonian [male] youths.

Awillo’s pieces of music are often direct and have earned a big reputation for his socio-economic and political messages; as a matter of fact, he sings truth to power. He and Lapiro de Mbanga are nothing less than musical heroes. For example in February 2008 during a nationwide protest orchestrated by conspicuous rise in prices of goods and services in Cameroon, there were gossips circulating that Awillo was on the run from police and gendarmes. Later in 2008, Lapiro de Mbanga was imprisoned and it was alleged that this was after the release of his song “*constitution constipée*” where he condemned the president for changing the constitution that limited his presidential mandate allowing him to run for office until his death. He was released in 2011 after pressure from international human rights organizations. He died on March 16th 2014 after being granted asylum as a political refugee in the United States.

Music thus constitutes part of the daily life experiences of a people and can serve as both an expression and an instrument to try to change society. As such, music has the power to inform, influence, and instigate positive change. Awillo recalls that the country is bad, but he also asks: who spoiled it? Who will fix it? And where is the future of the Cameroonian youths? Judging from the present state of Cameroon, these questions remain central. It can also be argued that it is this uncertainty for a future in Cameroon which has also changed the transnational Cameroonian migration landscape from a ‘been to’ type of migration to a bushfalling type of migration—the enduring allure of bushfalling.

Socio-economic crises and transnational migration: the enduring allure of bushfalling

A routinised state of crises¹²⁵

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) that was introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank led to retrenchment of many civil servants¹²⁶. Some authors maintain that the country's crises reach its peak in the early 90s with the layoff of many workers and about a 70 percent cut in salaries of civil servants (Molua, 2009: 1669, Schrieder and Knerr, 2000: 227). There was also the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 which led to a decrease in local buying power (Monga, 1995) in Pelican et al, (2008: 117), see also Alpes, (2013a: 5)¹²⁷. With this decrease in purchasing power for many Cameroonians coupled with the fall in prices of agricultural

¹²⁵ This phrase is inspired by Mbembe and Roitman, (1995) study in Cameroon on the Figures of the Subject in Times of Crisis.

¹²⁶ The SAP was introduced in Cameroon in 1989. These were macroeconomic policies that were introduced by the Bretton Woods Institution (the IMF and the World Bank) to address development issues facing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the basic elements of the programs were: restructuring of the public finances, agriculture, marketing structures, deregulation of internal commerce, improvement of incentives for petroleum exploration and promotion, reorientation of the policies in the forestry, health, and education sectors (World Bank, 1989). Available online at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/1989/05/722716/cameroon-structural-adjustment-program-project> (accessed 07.07.2016). The implementation of these policies took many forms including the privatisation of state-owned companies and enterprises as well as the retrenchment of workers.

¹²⁷ It has been argued that the economic development intention of the SAPs rather increased economic dependence and poverty in many countries in SSA e.g. Chabal and Daloz, (1999: 119) maintain that it cannot be “convincingly” proven that SAPs “lessened Africa’s dependence”. They blame the dysfunctionality of African states for SAPs in-effectiveness—patrimonialism, clientelism and corruption are central to foundations of power in Africa, they argue. Ferguson, (2006) rather put the blame of SAP ineffectiveness on the Bretton Woods institutions; arguing that liberalisation is shown to be a veil masking the exploitative intentions of the IMF-World Bank regime and that all that SAPs assisted was Africa’s underdevelopment (pg.71, 78).

products¹²⁸, many resorted to different coping mechanisms; one of which was international migration and sending home remittances.

Moreover, there was massive unemployment especially for the youths with a 13.4 percent unemployment rate for university graduates, and 10.7 percent for those who have completed primary education (Walther, 2006 in Fleischer, 2011: 69). Eloudou-Enyegue and Davanzo, (2003) in (Fleischer: 70) noted an even higher urban unemployment rate (30 percent) for university graduates. With the economic crisis, many resorted to transnational migration as the only way out for a better life. Some Cameroonians who were employed but not well paid resorted also to emigration. This was the case with many medical doctors and physicians. For example in the year 2000, emigration rate of tertiary educated was 14.6 percent. Emigration of physicians was 845 or 45.6 percent of the physicians trained in the country (Clemens and Petterson, 2006). Emigration of nurses was 1.163 or 18.9 percent of the nurses trained in the country¹²⁹. According to statistics from the Cameroon Medical Association between the years 1995-2005, about 4200 Cameroonian medical doctors, most of them specialists, are working abroad. This means that only about 800 are present, creating a very high doctor to patient ratio. According to these figures, it is estimated that there is 1 doctor for between 10,000 to 20,000 inhabitants in the cities, and 1 doctor for between 40,000 to 50,000 in the rural areas (Pigeaud, 2007) in Evina (2009: 22).

In a country which in Smith (2007) sense is plagued by everyday corruption¹³⁰, many have resorted to different survival strategies.

¹²⁸ The fall in the prices of agricultural produce had a huge negative impact on the economy because the agricultural sector in Cameroon employs about 70 percent of the labour force. Within this sector, farmers carry out both subsistence farming and cash crop farming, notably in coffee and cocoa.

¹²⁹ Clemens and Petterson, (2006) in Migration and Remittances Factbook.

¹³⁰ According to Transparency International, Cameroon came last in a list of about 85 countries that were surveyed; meaning that Cameroon was the most corrupt nation during this year (Transparency International, 1998), Corruption watch dog:

http:
[//www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/previous_cpi/1998](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/previous_cpi/1998), (accessed, September 29, 2010). The corruption perception index for Cameroon in 2010 was 2.2 on a scale of 10 with 10 being the least corrupt countries.

Mbembe and Roitman (1995) described this routinized state of crises as characterized by economic hardships which is met with brutal collapse of prices, diverse form of extraction, coercion, and constraint. The result of these is large scale mobility for many a family in Cameroon. Even some of the few Cameroonians who have still kept on with their jobs amidst low salaries, and at times no salaries, there is a lack of an ethics of work. The work place becomes what these authors refer to as a “social site”, not unlike a cafe or salon. One goes there to make phone calls, visit people, sell things, converse. It is also a place for *rendez-vous*. It marks off, in this sense, the frontier between “life inside” with its familial pressures and “life outside” (Mbembe and Roitman, 1995: 350).

Moreover, more than fifty years after independence, Cameroon’s political atmosphere is marked by what Nyamnjoh, (2002a) describes as “cosmetic democracy”; fuelled by constant cabinet reshuffle that tend to trade efficiency for political expediency (Jua, 1991: 164). Nyamnjoh, (1999: 116, 118) asserts that as the ‘national cake’ diminishes with worsening economic crises and other social and political discontents¹³¹, there are dire needs for Cameroonians to have something to fall back on, what he calls “survival strategies”. He adds that “the system has little regard for virtue and proves to have more room for loyal mediocrity than critical excellence. It thrives on appearances and not substance, making subservient mediocrities feels more important than real achievers...” (1999: 107). Some other survival strategies adopted by Cameroonians to cope with the economic crises include the creation of tontines, farmer’s cooperatives, and church groups as a way to mutually help each other (Diduk, 2004: 43-44).

Transparency international, corruption perception index: <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2010/results> (accessed 2013.12.1)

¹³¹ Hatton and Williamson, (2003) study confirms that Sub Saharan Africa’s high demographics and low incomes are spearheading transnational migration for the continent. In a related study, Piot (2010) observed a similar pattern of economic crisis and popular discontent resulting to mass transnational migration from Togo. Playing the DV becomes a predominant exit strategy. As a young Togolese mentions, “playing the visa lottery gives us hope that there may be a life beyond Togo and that we can live like everyone else” (2010: 77).

As one Cameroonian artist sings, even “the father” of the nation believes that a goat eats where it is tethered; therefore many have devised coping mechanisms. Jua (1988: 745) confirms that, the post-colonial state of Cameroon is a patrimonial state where the petty bourgeoisie uses state budget for the accumulation of personal wealth. He writes that assuming office in the government or a political position becomes an access route for secured financial-social insurance. Bayart has similar observations. He asserts that the state of Cameroon is a state of continuous domination of the majority by a few minorities. Employment in the public service is seen as an opportunity “to eat” (Bayart, 1984, 2006: 10).

Bayart, (2006) *L'État en Afrique* begins with an anecdote exemplifying what goes on in the country. In this story, Djoda is an employee in North Cameroon. He suddenly finds out that his rent and costs of living have increased leaving him frustrated on how he will take care of his families and what strategies to put in place to achieve this goal. Djoda's case depicts a general situation for Cameroon. Bayart elucidates that, by any means possible, Cameroonians, want to get not just into the public service, but in particular into politics so that they can enrich themselves. This situation is described as the “politics of the belly”. It is about self-enrichment; as Bayart describe it, one has “to eat” when he gets the opportunity because in Cameroon, “a goat eats where it is tethered” (2006: 10).

Bayart maintains that, in contemporary Cameroon, a presidential decree in which a person is dismissed from a duty, his post of a director or Divisional Officer for instance, is explained by his circle of friends and family as food has been taken away from him. On the other hand, if it is an appointment to an important post, it is celebrated as he has been given food, or he has been given to eat; that is, “on lui a donné la bouffe” (2006: 10). Bayart further notes that, to have employment and especially a top position is equivalent to be given food and a chance to give food to relatives and acquaintances.

Having a ‘godfather’ and its implication for out migration

As Awillo mentions in his song lyrics above, “if you don’t have a ‘godfather’ it is at your own risk”. The ‘godfather’ is used in a generic sense involving both men and women. These are relatives and acquaintances that are placed in high ranking positions in the different public service sectors. Sometimes, with just a simple phone call, a ‘godfather’ can help his/her acquaintances get a job, an entrance into public professional schools e.g. ENAM (Ecole Nationale d’Administration et de Magistrature), or to get an important document, or to win a court case, to cite a few examples. Depending on the nature of the relationship with his/her acquaintances and depending on the situation of the person requiring assistance, a ‘godfather’ can receive some form of ‘payment/appreciation’ (bribe) for his/her service. This is especially the case where this ‘godfather’ needs to contact another friend in a similar position to get the service delivered. For example the son or daughter of honourable Governor XX is seeking admission into ENAM¹³². Governor XX has a friend or knows someone who is in

¹³² ENAM is one of the prestigious professional training schools in Cameroon. It is government-owned and upon completion, graduates are immediately recruited into the public services. The entrance exam to ENAM is very competitive and expensive. It comprises of two stages—the written part and the orals. It is said that most of the students who graduated from ENAM have connections and did bribe to get in. Candidates who passed the written test are invited for oral tests. At this stage, most candidates have to bribe unless they have parents or other relatives who are top executives. The amount paid as bribe varies per program, the amount paid to be enrolled in the department of customs is the most expensive, probably because custom officials themselves receive so many bribes that can easily cover up what they spent to get the job. One of my friend’s family had to ‘pay’ (bribe) 2.5 million FCFA for her younger sister to be enrolled in the department of customs. Moreover, the bribe needs to be paid to the right person, to a ‘big man’ with strong connections otherwise the son/daughter might not get in despite haven’t bribed. In one of our Cameroonian meetings, a friend announced that he has ‘connections’ at the seaport in Douala to help anyone who wish to ship cars back home. His younger sister works there. For her to get into ENAM and to be posted at the seaport upon graduation, all the money he spent to bribe different ‘big men’ was 12 million FCFA (24000CHF). Discussing with him, he told me that he doesn’t regret paying this money because within a year, he will recover it. “Chris, there is money at the seaport. Custom officials have money. Only the ‘dash’ that you get is 5 times more than your salary. That is why you see all this big people

charge of the recruitment process of ENAM. He calls his friend and requests his assistance to make sure his son or daughter gets into ENAM even if s/he does not meet up with the minimum grade required¹³³. In such cases, students who actually meet up the requirement but without such ‘godfather’ or money to bribe are taken out of the list¹³⁴. Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, (2006) describe this as everyday corruption of the state in Africa. In this state of affairs, the relationship between the state and its citizens is one in which one uses his/her social position to ‘help’ un *parent, ami, ou connaissance* (Olivier de Sardan, 2009: 48-49). However, in some other less prestigious public recruitment schools such as teachers training colleges, most students get in on merit, that is, without passing through a ‘godfather’. Many friends told me that instead of wasting their money to ‘bribe’ for an entrance into e.g. ENAM, it is better to use the money to fall bush¹³⁵. Besides, it is better to risk giving money

fighting to put their children there. I fought hard, and spent so much money for my sister to be where she is today...” he said. Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, (2006: 4-5, 73-74) describe this as a ‘generalised informal functioning of the state’ in Africa which is fuelled with corrupt practices such as favouritism, clientelism, and ‘string-pulling’. They exemplify similar practices in Benin and Senegal where an appointment to a custom post is a ‘lucrative’ site for the rapid accumulation of wealth obtainable through bribes.

¹³³ Smith, (2007: 62-75) describes similar practices in Nigeria.

¹³⁴ For instance in the 2016-2017 ENAM results published on August 10th 2016, it was revealed that the son of a former minister in Cameroon was admitted twice in two different departments. As a rule, a student only gets admitted into one department which is where s/he will be posted upon completion of studies. But in this case, the name of this former minister’s son appeared under those admitted in the section of General Administration and also in the section of Economy and Finance. It was said that due to his father’s influence, the authorities of ENAM were afraid not to lose their position in case the son of the former minister was not admitted. In this confusion, they made a mistake and put his name in the list of admitted students for two different departments. This led to huge public criticism and people called for the cancellation of the results which never happened. It was also identified that 8 students admitted are children and relatives of former and current top government officials and ministers http://www.camer.be/53858/1:11/les-admissibilites-du-concours-de-lenam-et-les-stupidites-des-dirigeants-camerounais-cameroon.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=facebook (accessed 20.08.2016).

¹³⁵ During my never ending desire to fall bush, a former boss of mine from Germany had suggested that I enrol into an ENAM concours and use the money for bushfalling to bribe. For her, this was better than falling bush for studies

to a broker for a bushfalling ‘line’ than to give to a ‘godfather’ who might end up not helping you get the exact position you want. Moreover, the gains derived from any such employment can be insignificant compared to the gains in the form of remittances through migration.

I use the case of Muake to expand on the importance of having a ‘godfather’ if one wants to have a good professional life in Cameroon:

Muake lived in Switzerland for about 10 years. He left Cameroon as a visitor to Russia, from there, he left for Italy. With the help of some friends, he managed to get to Switzerland about 10 years ago. While in Switzerland, he applied and was admitted in one of the private universities from where he obtained his bachelor and master degrees. Upon completion of his master degree, he succeeded in getting jobs in some of the international organizations in Switzerland. Through his jobs, he got a resident permit that allowed him to stay in the country. But in the summer of 2013 when his last contract ended, he couldn’t get any other job and so he had to leave.

Muake visited me to inform me he was going back home and I felt sad because he is someone I had become so used to hanging out with. Friends tried to convince him not to go back home. Others even suggested that he should go to France to seek for an asylum just so he can stay in Europe. “What are you going to do back home”? A friend asked. I criticized the idea of Muake going to France to seek for asylum, an idea which he himself didn’t like. He explained to me that with his over 5 years of work experience in many international organizations, and with his *connections*¹³⁶ in Cameroon, he knows he will get a good job when he gets home.

Muake finally returned home in mid-July leaving his wife who still had a few things to put in place before later joining her husband. It so

without a scholarship. An idea which I completely dismissed, in fact, I didn’t even give it a thought.

¹³⁶ Connections here means knowing or having friends and/or relatives who occupy top positions in the government who can help you to get a job, sometimes just by a phone call (it is another way to talk about ‘godfather’). In Bayart’s sense, these are the ‘Big men’ against a majority ‘Small men’ (1993: 60-63, 68-70).

happened that municipal elections were to take place in Cameroon that same year in October 2013. And Muake's mum was running as one of the deputies in the ruling party for one of the municipalities. While at home, I often called Muake just to greet him and to find out how he was doing and how things were going on in his life. He explained to me that he hasn't gotten a job yet, but that for the time being he is very busy campaigning for his mum because if his mum wins, as he puts it "things will be fine", especially because she is from the ruling party. It will increase his connection horizons. Unfortunately Muake's mum and her team didn't win, it was one of the opposition parties that won in that municipality.

But that didn't stop there. The political strategy failed, nonetheless Muake needed to get a job. With no job, his wife who was still in Switzerland had to send him money every month for his up-keep and that of their two children. Fortunately for Muake, one of his uncles has connections with some of the top ranking officials in Cameroon. One of them had asked Muake to send him his CV so that he can get a job for him into the public service. Muake now works in the public service in a middle management position. Through his mum and uncle's connections, Muake finally got a job that could allow him to live a comfortable life in Cameroon. It is not only that Muake had the needed educational qualification and work experience, but he also had the right 'connections'. The problem here is that since there are many qualified people applying for the same jobs, at the end of the day, the issue is not who is really qualified but who has the strongest 'connections'.

In this state of affairs, and in most cases, getting a job requires that one must have a 'godfather'. For many young Cameroonians, international migration becomes a way out to escape the many uncertainties that they might be confronted, especially for those from less privileged families that don't have the right connections. Alpes, (2013a: 6) confirms that:

"Young Cameroonians from less privileged backgrounds often struggle to set up professionally in Cameroon because they lack the kinds of social networks and connections with people in high places that have currently become crucial for employment in crises ridden

Cameroon. Bushfalling here offers young Cameroonians from the lower middle classes a way of bypassing their social position in Cameroon by seeking to set up new connections with bush for their family” (2013a: 6).

Hence remittances accruing from transnational migration tend to fulfil many of the needs of individuals and their families that cannot be met by the failed Cameroonian state. For instance Alpes, (2011: 16) mentions that with only 30 or 50 Euros, a bushfaller can at times solve life threatening problems. In the absence of health insurance and other social securities provided by the state, the presence of a bushfaller can be crucial for the survival and well-being of a family. Besides these socio-economic crises which have resulted to increasing transnational Cameroonian migration, sexuality is also a motive for such mobility patterns.

Sexual orientation as a motive for transnational Cameroonian migration

So far, research on what Eboko and Awondo (2013) described as “homo-mobilités” has shown that this form of migration is mostly used by men. Cameroonian women on their part are more engaged in “cybermigration”¹³⁷ (Nitchou, 1999, Johnson-Hanks, (2007). Sexual orientation deals with different sexualities—gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender. Lubheid (2004: 227-232, and Manalansan 2006) assert that sexuality structure every aspect of migration because it examines how lesbians and gays flee from countries with repressive heterosexual norms to countries where they can freely live with their sexualities. Relating sexuality to remittances, Lubheid suggests that it is important that we understand “more about how paid employment bears on one’s ability to live “as gay” or “as lesbian” as well as about how earnings shape the production of heterosexual identity among immigrants”.

¹³⁷ But this does not mean that there are no female homosexuals; and just like their male counterparts, it is a highly condemned practiced that if discovered one risks being killed by members of the community. But using sexual orientation as a motive for migration is mostly used by homosexual men (see Awondo, 2010).

Homosexuality is an issue which is rarely discussed within family settings in Cameroon; in fact it is considered a taboo. The 1981 Civil Status Ordinance of Cameroon forbids same sex marriage. Section 52 (3) of the Ordinance states that no marriage shall be celebrated if the spouses-to-be are of the same sex. In 2014, it came out in the news that Roger, a Cameroonian died in prison for sending a text message to another man that read: “I love you”¹³⁸. Therefore sexuality can be a reason for out migration from Cameroon. Eboko and Awondo, (2013) confirm that although economic factors remain a strong motivation for out migration in Cameroon, the rapid crackdown and extensive societal disapproval of homosexuality have paved the way for increasing transnational migration. In their study, they show that many Francophone homosexual Cameroonians migrate to France.

In a conversation with Joshua, who is a Cameroonian student in Switzerland, he told me “you will be shocked to hear that there are some Cameroonians here in Switzerland who are gays. One of them even approached me, and to be honest with you, I was shocked...” The story holds that Alfred left Cameroon more than 10 years ago as a partner to a Swiss man. I was told that Alfred explained to his friends that his intention was to stop being gay once his legal status in Switzerland was regulated. This didn’t happen as Alfred continued his homosexual relationship years after he got his Swiss passport.

On a visit to Cameroon a few years back to see his family, his mum suggested that it was time for him to get a wife. But he explained to his mum that he is gay and so has no desire for a woman. His mum fell on the ground and exclaimed “oh, my son is lost. He is dead”. While in Cameroon, Alfred kept his sexuality secret and asked his mum not to tell the other members of his family. Alfred’s sexuality has put him into serious conflict with his mum and wider Cameroonian society.

Having discussed the socio-cultural and economic factors that explain bushfalling, the next chapter focuses on understanding how Cameroonians migrate.

¹³⁸ http://news.yahoo.com/gay-39-prisoner-conscience-39-dies-cameroon-110357642.html?soc_src=mediacontentsharebuttons (accessed 2014.01.22)

How Cameroonians migrate

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how Cameroonians migrate by examining the main agents of migration, notably the family and migration brokers. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one is on the family. I begin with a brief overview of families' roles in migration after which I used case studies to illustrate how families engage in migration projects, primarily through financing. Part two examines the role of brokers. I present also an inquiry on migration brokerage, and later distinguish between formal and informal brokers and their work. I use case studies to illustrate how a broker transforms an aspiring migrant into a migrant, showing how the brokerage network extends beyond Cameroon. I show how migrants continue to rely on various forms of network and brokerage even while abroad. I also did examine the legitimacy of migration brokerage through the framework of brokerage-as-the-making-of-a-legal-subject. Nonetheless for some people, getting a visa requires not just the assistance of brokers, but God—divine brokerage (intervention). Still, not all migration projects come into fruition even in cases where the money was already paid to the broker. Yet, there are those who succeeded in travelling but get deported; so I end this chapter by exploring how failed migration is understood and interpreted in Cameroon—the stigma associated with deportation.

Family as a domestic unit and its role in transnational migration

It has been argued that families play an important role in transnational migration. As domestic units, they are also units of [re]production, distribution, consumption, and decision making. This explains why over the past decades, researchers and anthropologists have begun to pay attention to how the family shape and is shaped

by migration. Stark and Bloom, (1985) were one of the first to write on the role of family in migration. They posit that migration is a family strategy to minimize risk and diversify income. The family plays an important role in the migration project in terms of financial provision and decisions as to who migrate and in return benefits from migration through remittances. These authors view migration as embedded within an implicit contractual agreement between the migrant and their families.

Building on Stark and Bloom, (1985), Boyd, (1989: 641) highlights the role of family and personal networks in international migration. Situating family and personal networks in a web of flows, she notes that these flows and counter flows of goods, ideas, and people take place between countries. Using what she framed as a migration system approach, she argued that this network of family and friends connects people across space and time and is self-sustaining, involving not only assistance among parties, but also obligations between migrants and their families in their areas of origin.

Boyd reiterates the importance of studying international migration from a household or family perspective and she places these under what she calls the domestic unit. This unit for her includes households and people who may or may not be related by blood. To Boyd, the domestic unit approach to the study of international migration and remittances remains imperative because domestic units are sustenance units with their own structural characteristics which condition the propensity to migrate and the pattern of the migration. Boyd's approach suggests that these units possess the capacity to determine the outcome of migration.

She adds that domestic units are socializing agents; as such, family settings are spaces where cultural values and norms are transmitted and this influences decisions as to who should migrate and why (Boyd, 1989: 642-643). Following Boyd's argument, one can deduce that it is within family and kinship settings that the meanings of migration and in particular transnational African and Cameroonian migrations are defined. It is also here that obligations, duties and responsibilities towards kin are implicitly defined, maintained, and sustained over time and space.

In line with Boyd, (1989) Tiemoko, (2004: 156) also suggests that migration should be studied as a social process involving a household or family mechanism that encompasses a mix of social, economic, and cultural dimensions. This observation resonates with Drotbohm, (2009: 147) thesis that family and kinship ties are socially and culturally determined. In relation to international migration, social relations are negotiable, as well as prescribed and structurally determined. Family relations are not fixed, but fluid with the ever present possibility of conflicts that take place within family settings especially in relation to migration.

Boyd, (1989) proposition of studying migration from a family perspective fits well with the observation of some authors' theses on Cameroonian migration, in particular that of Schrieder and Knerr, (2000). They maintain that migration is used as a social security mechanism by most families in Cameroon. These authors assert that most families in Cameroon rely on remittances flow from internal or international migration to solve some family needs like shelter, education, health, to name a few. Similarly, Fleischer, (2007, 2011) observed that the family, and in particular the extended family plays an important role in transnational Cameroonian migration in terms of raising the money needed for a migration project and deciding who migrates. At the same time, it is also the beneficiary of remittances.

Mincer, (1978) asserts that families take into account a number of factors before deciding who migrates and who stays. In taking such decisions, Adepaju, (1995: 329) stresses that in the case of Africa, senior members of the family play an important role. Besides other factors, the person with the greatest potential for supporting the family through remittances is chosen.

Families

The 'operational' family and the 'general' family

Fleischer, (2007: 436) observes that in Cameroonian transnational migration, besides the conjugal and extended family, the community and local associations such as tontines are important social gatherings where people meet to save money needed for various purposes (given that many people don't have bank accounts)

e.g. to raise capital for business, paying of children's school fees, buy land, purchasing household items, building a house, paying for transnational migration projects, to cite a few¹³⁹.

In relation to families' role in transnational migration, some of the questions often asked with regards to studies related to families are: how can one conceptually and empirically define a family in migration research? Does family have a universal social nature? Does it have fixed boundaries? Who belongs and who does not?

In my attempt to respond to these questions, I would first re-visit Tiemoko, (2004: 157-158) observation. He makes the case that in practice, perceptions and definitions of the family vary according to the different socio-cultural contexts in which individuals and family members live and have lived. Therefore one would argue that when it comes to migration, conceptions of family are continually shaped and reshaped. Following this changing nature of what constitute a family in relation to migration, Tiemoko suggests that it is better to live it up to the migrants to define who their families are and why.

In line with Tiemoko, (2004) proposition, for me, conceptually thinking, the family is an umbrella term that embodies different socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Firstly, families are institutions rooted in human history and define by law and ties of blood and secondly one can think of a family as a web of relationships and network of friendship ties. If we perceive family in these ways, we can [re]conceptualize its definition in a more nuanced way. That means we deviate from conceptualizing families only as biological bounded entities. In the course of this study, it is evident that, families, at least as the migrants' see it, involves several individuals both the nuclear and extended family.

¹³⁹ Tontines which are rotating credit associations were started by the people of the western Grassfields in particular the Bamilekes but this practice has become widely diffuse across the different ethnic groups in Cameroon. These different associations can be made up of people from the same ethnic group, or place of work, or in a neighbourhood. The group might decide to meet every end of week or end of month depending on the agreement of the members. Also, the amount invested varies according to the socio-economic capacity of the members for instance it can be 500FCFA, 2000 or to even 100 thousand FCFA or more (Warnier 1993b, 2006, Feldman-Savelsberg, 1999).

Thus in relation to transnational migration within the Cameroon context, I would differentiate between what I call the *operational* family (which can include members of the nuclear and extended family as well as close and trusted friends and neighbors)¹⁴⁰ that actually finance the migration and the ‘*general*’ family considered as those who are, in one way or the other, related to the migrant but are excluded or do not partake in the migration venture. In fact, in such cases, they are informed only once the migrant has already travelled. Nonetheless, even those who didn’t partake in the migration venture also tend to demand/lay claim for remittances when the migrant is in bush. Some of these people include blood relations, friends, class and school mates, and in-laws, to name a few. Yet, the ‘operational’ family tends to benefit more from remittances compared to the ‘general’ family¹⁴¹. From the ‘operational’ family comes what I have called a “family manager” who is the person who actually receives and/or manages most of the remittances that are sent (see chapter 8). The ‘operational’ family prays for the success of the migrant, it also ensures that the migrant is protected from perceived spiritual/witchcraft threats (as the case of Matilda in the next sections shows), and it sends the migrant some gifts from home¹⁴².

Families investing in migration projects: decision, gender, financing, secrecy and trust

In this subsection, I use the case of Matilda to exemplify how families invest in a migration journey. I also examine the gendered patterns that shape migratory decisions as well as the issue of trust

¹⁴⁰ Because preparations for departure are not discussed openly, those who are informed are members of this operational family (a trusted socio-familial relation). For instance, a friend or neighbour can be informed of a migration project while an aunt or uncle is not told and vice versa. In fact, at the preparation and departure stage, information circulates only within a restricted trusted network because people say that one might be bewitched and the migration project would fail.

¹⁴¹ Finch and Mason, (1991: 356), confirms that obligations to close family are stronger than for distant kin.

¹⁴² But this does not mean that relations between the migrant and his/her operational family are void of tensions. If the migrant arrives in bush and ‘forget’ the family (especially the operational family), then, they might afflict the migrant with bad luck for betraying them (see chapter 9).

and secrecy due to the fear of witchcraft that are dominant in migration departure preparations.

Matilda finished university and started teaching part time in a secondary school. A year later, she got a job in one of the international NGOs in Cameroon where she worked for one year. Through a friend who was in the US, she was interested to go there. She told her parents about the discussion with her friend and her parents encouraged her to pursue it further. Both her parents were primary school teachers, now retired. The issue of raising the money wouldn't be a major problem as she already had two sisters abroad. The first sister who migrated stayed in Germany for three years. Upon receiving her permanent residence in Germany, she sent her passport home to a younger sister who used it to travel to join her in Germany. Deborah later left her younger sister in Germany and re-located to Switzerland.

In 2005, Matilda applied for a Cameroonian passport. Usually at the regional level, a passport takes on average 4 weeks to be issued, but Matilda's passport took longer. After seven weeks, she went to the South West regional delegation of national security to collect her passport. She could see that her name was on the list of those whose passports were ready. But when she went into the office to collect hers, it was nowhere to be found. "I saw black man magic manifesting itself", she echoed¹⁴³. Matilda reported the matter to her

¹⁴³ It is not unusual to see people attribute an incident of 'lost' passport to be as a result of witchcraft. In Cameroon, when it comes to migration, any incident that threatens to obstruct a migration project is associated to witchcraft and bad luck from 'enemies of progress' who can be either kin or non-kin. A similar example is when one of my brothers applied for his passport. His name was written on the notice board for those whose passports were ready for pick up at the regional delegation of national security. When he went to pick up his, it could not be found. One of my sisters who is a 'born again' Christian said that God revealed to her that the 'forces of darkness' were blocking my brother's passport and my parents believed what my sister said. My brother was invited to my sister's church so that the pastor could pray for him and cast out the 'evil spirit'. I explained to my brother that it may have been a mistake from the passport office to declare that his passport was ready where as it was not. So I encouraged him to apply again, but this time, not at the regional level but in Yaoundé. He and my sister insisted that he would not re-apply until the pastor prays for him, which is what he did. Two months later, he went to Yaoundé to apply and the passport came out after four weeks.

parents who claimed that witches were at work. They suspected the other family members including even some neighbors for wanting to prevent their daughter from travelling. Matilda explained that:

According to my mum, the other family members and neighbors were jealous because two of my sisters have already gone abroad. We are 7 in my family and I am the third. So for them to sit and watch my family progressing in this way, they didn't like it. My mum first went to see our pastor but a friend of hers advised that a pastor could not solve the matter. It was better if she seek the service of a "ngambe man" (a witch doctor, a diviner). My mum went there and came back with the story that some of my relatives in the village had caused my passport to disappeared so that I will not travel. The "ngambe man" advised my mum to come with me so that he "can work on me" (fortify her against evil spirits and/or witches) and the following week, we went to see him. He mixed some things in water and gave me to drink and then cut me with a razor and applied some black powder-like concoction. I was told not to shower until the following day, and this was to protect me against witches.

I waited for another month and went to apply for my passport. This time, I travelled all the way to Yaoundé to apply for my passport. After three weeks, I asked a friend of mine to go and check if my name was on the board. She checked and called me that my passport was ready so I travelled to Yaoundé and got my passport. When I applied for my passport, I was already preparing my documents to go to the US. I didn't apply for any school in the US because I met a broker who said he could make me to travel with his NGO as one of his staff. The plan was that I was to travel as a representative of this NGO. If the deal worked, I was to pay him two million FCFA excluding flight ticket. But I applied and didn't get the visa. The second time I applied, I already had an admission to do my master in one schools in the US. But I didn't get the visa either.

It was during this time that I changed my mind, and decided to try another country, even though I really wanted to go to the US. So my sister who was already in Switzerland encouraged me to apply for studies there. I applied and was admitted for a master degree program at the University of Bern. My sister paid for my school fees. It was not

expensive, about 1000CHF. So with the receipt, I applied for my Swiss visa and got it. My sister in Germany and the one in Switzerland paid for my flight ticket. All the money I had initially saved for my travel was all gone to follow up documents here and there when I was following the US 'line'. So my parents gave me some money and they prepared some food for me to take along. I didn't tell anybody, not even one of my friends who was close to me. I only called her later and told her. I explained to her that everything happened so fast and I was so busy that I just didn't think of telling anyone, I didn't want my friend to be annoyed¹⁴⁴. So when I explained to her, she understood and told me to remember her when my money starts to flow.

So in terms of decision it was my decision to travel. But the choice of country is what I didn't really have in mind. But growing up as a child, I have always wished to go to the US or the UK. So when my friend who was in the US brought up the idea, it was like an opportunity I had been waiting to pursue although the 'line' didn't go through.

In terms of gender and deciding who should go, there was no way my parents would have allowed my younger brother to travel when I was still in Cameroon. I mean he is my younger brother. Beside, my dad already saw what my eldest sister has been doing to the family, so his conception about male children had changed. I think this is why they really supported me so that I could leave.

Matilda's story is one out of so many narratives that illustrate the circumstances that surround migration preparation in the context of departure. Families, precisely the 'operational' family can do whatever it takes to ensure the successful travel of their migrant even if that means seeking solutions from a "ngambe man". Migration in this sense is never a one person's business. It entails a family coming together to pull resources relating to finance. It is always a family project. There is always some family involvement and different forms of support irrespective of whether the migrant is migrating through a broker or autonomously. But whether that support is coming from immediate and/or extended family and friends vary for different

¹⁴⁴ Piot, (1993) describes similar practices of secrecy and fear of witchcraft amongst the Kabre in Togo. In this society, people have to be watchful with what they say, how they behave, and how they share money, goods/material items.

migrants. In the case of Matilda, we have seen that money for her migration project was a contribution from her parents and her two elder sisters who were already abroad.

Migrants tend to define who they involve or not and at what stage during the preparation of their journey. Sometimes some other families partake into the process but without being aware that the financial or other forms of support they are being asked for is for a migration project. The real intention for borrowing money is often hidden, and only to be disclosed afterwards when the migrant has already left. Or in the case where money was borrowed, the lender can come to know the truth only if the borrower can't meet up with the deadline for repayment. You will hear an explanation such as: "my sister or my brother, don't be angry with me for failing to pay you back on time. We borrowed this money so that XX should travel abroad but the program didn't go through".

Familial and non-familial support can be moral, financial, and/or spiritual. For a migrant to succeed abroad, s/he needs blessings from either/or his parents, ancestors, elders, pastors. These blessings take place before and even after the migrant travels. Below is an example of a pre-departure scenario as described in Emecheta, (1974: 25-26):

"The night before he left ..., Francis took a group photograph with his family... A relative of theirs came to make a special prayer to the river Oboshi. Some pieces of kolanut were brought by Francis's mother, and these were broken by the relative, then they were thrown into a circle on the floor, drawn with a chalk. A long prayer was sung to the goddess, who was four hundred miles away in Ibuza. She was requested to guide Francis, to keep him from the evil eye of white girls, to make him pass his examinations in good time, to bless him with all the money in England, to bless him with everything that was good in England; she was requested most especially to forget him when circulating diseases and anything plaguey".

Secrecy is vital, but to say that migrants keep their journey secret does not mean no one is told, it just means that those who are told

are carefully selected trusted persons¹⁴⁵. The fact that the loss of Matilda's passport was attributed to witchcraft is informative of how witchcraft discourses are internalised within Cameroonian migration. It is this fear of witchcraft that makes migration preparation departure strictly confidential. Moreover, because witchcraft is the dark side of kinship, and that in Cameroon one must learn to live with one's sorcerer (Geschiere, 1997b: 212)¹⁴⁶, one can never know what are the intentions of one's relatives; see also Alpes, (2012: 97-98). As one of my neighbors puts it "man no fit know weti di go on for people their belly" (you can never know what is going on in people's belly /stomach).

The case of Matilda further shows that one needs money and luck in order to migrate successfully. Thus family is important in different capacities: first to financially support the project and secondly to make sure it happens by protecting the potential migrant against jealousy that may bring about witchcraft and misfortune from other family members and/or neighbours.

In terms of gender, I realized while conducting field work in Cameroon that people nowadays prefer to send their daughters abroad rather than their sons if they have to make a choice regarding who should travel. When asked whether parents will prefer to send their male or female child abroad, 7 (that is, 4 men and 3 women) out of 10 persons interviewed said they will prefer to send their daughters. The reasons they gave were many, but some of the most recurrent answers were:

¹⁴⁵ For example in my own case, I remember vividly how my parents and siblings, including one of my very close maternal uncle, an aunt, and two neighbors gathered at my parents' house to share a meal and prayed for me on the day I was leaving for Sweden in 2009. My uncle who is my mum's younger brother was raised by my mum so he was like our eldest brother. While at university in Cameroon, he sometimes gave me money when I went to visit my parents during weekends. The paternal aunt who was present had come to visit my parents the day before and realized I was leaving. The other external relatives, friends, and neighbors were only informed afterwards.

¹⁴⁶ As can be seen in the case of Matilda, one of the ways that people adopt in living with their sorcerer or dealing with perceived witchcraft threats is to consult a witch doctor so that they can be fortified against the occult. It seems the only family members that could be trusted in relation to Matilda's migration were her siblings and biological parents.

- “Girls will always look after their families no matter what happens (families in this case refers to a girl’s natal family, nuclear and extended). Even if a girl is a prostitute, she will work for the family”.
- “If a man gets married, his concern will be his wife and he might forget about us back home, but if a woman gets married, she will still look after her family back home”¹⁴⁷.
- “I want my daughter to go because when she gets married and give birth, I will go for “umogwo”” (“umogwo” means to help babysit a grandchild). This response was common amongst women—mothers and aunts.

As a matter of fact, the changing economic conditions and increased education of women have changed societal and familial perception of women and women’s migration. One of my informant’s uncles I interviewed in Cameroon told me that: “times have past when we used to think that only boys could do that much. But now, we have seen that more and more, girls are the ones doing the best for their families. Men are just there, maybe as successors as tradition demands, but if I want to make any financial commitment for my children to go overseas, I will first send off my daughters before I think about my sons even if the daughters are younger. Although sometimes there can be some silly girls out there, as there are some boys. But girls who travel abroad are more responsible to families than boys in many ways”.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ This could be as a result of the fact that men are under more pressure. Men, especially those married to Cameroonian women are expected to remit both to their agnatic family as well as their allied (in-laws) as tradition demands.

¹⁴⁸ In a conversation with one of my male informants Paul, this issue of girls being more responsible to families back home came up and I narrated him this statement made by this uncle. Paul commented that: “yes, it might be true that girls have more feelings towards their family but this is because it is easier for a woman to integrate than for a man. When a woman comes to Europe, she can easily get integrated through marriage. She can easily find a man who will marry her and give her papers to stay. In that way, she can work and send more money home. But for guys, it is not often the case. All girls here are looking for men who already have papers, no girl wants to marry any African man who doesn’t have papers. Here in Europe, if you are a guy and you don’t have papers, it will be difficult for you to get a wife, especially a girl from Africa or from Cameroon... hahahahaha” (we both

Brokers

Migration brokerage

Migration brokers are important players in the scene of transnational Cameroonian migration. I became aware of the role played by these brokers since my experience working as a Research Assistant in a project on transnational Cameroonian migration from September 2007 to January 2009. Some marriage migration, student migration, and various forms of unskilled labour migration are mediated by migration brokers.

Although much has been said about why migrants leave their home countries, why they remit, and the impacts of remittances on migrants' sending countries, it is important to also be mindful of the fact that legal constraints that conditions migrants' mobility are often quite intricate and not easily accessible and understandable for most migrants. For example the process of visa application and the ability to be granted a visa to travel depends on many factors which most aspiring migrants do not possess or do not understand. Therefore they turn to migration brokers who are specialized in the handling of such cases.

While migration brokerage is relatively new in Cameroon (it became popular in the years 1991-2000), Le Meur, (2008: 219-221) study shows that this practice has a long history in African migration. Using the case of Benin, he notes that in the late 1940s and 50s, young men from neighbouring villages organised into a team under the leadership of a man who had prior migration experience and who knew well about migration routes and opportunities for jobs in the neighbouring African countries of Togo, Ghana, and Ivory Coast.

Brokers are 'lines'¹⁴⁹ specialized, that is to say they gather specific skills and knowledge to send migrants to certain specific countries.

laughed as Paul rounded up his sentence). See chapter 7, section 7.1.1 for a broader analysis on this theme.

¹⁴⁹In Anglophone Cameroon migration projects with brokers are discussed in terms of "lines". If a migration broker sends off people say to China, he will say "I have a line to China and it costs this or that amount". See also, Alpes (2011). Lines are dubbed "réseau" (network) in Francophone Cameroon. In Cameroon, people don't use the word migration brokers. They are described as "those guys who help people to fall bush".

Usually these are countries where the brokers have established social networks (connections). In some cases, the broker had travelled to these countries, but sometimes not, he just relies on his connections. Migration brokerage in Cameroon is very male dominated. In the case where the broker is well established and has an office, he recruits female staff, but the women themselves are not brokers¹⁵⁰. Alpes, (2013c: 7) observes that the symbolic capital that it requires to act as a migration broker in Cameroon makes it easier for men than women to be credible as 'big men' with power and connections.

Minghuan, (2006: 12) notes that with increasing policing of borders, many individuals cannot afford cross border migration on their own, that is, unassisted. Moreover, given that strategies to control migration are more intensified in the countries of departure as argued by Alpes, (2014b), migration brokerage has become a profitable phenomenon. Brokers are essential for making transnational migration possible for many aspiring migrants. For many people in Cameroon, their dream of upward economic mobility made possible through migration cannot come to fruition without a broker's 'assistance'. Yet, migrant receiving countries' disciplinary tactics of regulating human mobility categorise these states' practices as legitimate and transparent, while brokers (and the services they offer) are stigmatized as profit-oriented criminals. Let us consider for example a migrant paying a broker to enter Europe by boat, or paying a broker to get a visa to travel abroad. States considered this money paid to non-state agents as an 'illegal' act even when the migration project is successful (Alpes, 2013d: 158)¹⁵¹.

¹⁵⁰ However, Linquist et al (2012: 16) note that with the increasing feminisation of migration, women are also becoming more and more exposed to information on migration routes and possibilities of employment in countries of destination. Using the case of Asian migrants, these authors make the case that women brokers in Asia are specialised in recruiting women domestic servants to employers abroad or matching them up with potential marriage partners abroad. Constable, (2003, 2006) described this as mail-order marriages. She insists that these mail-order bride marriages (what she described as the commodification of marriage (Constable 2009)) contracted with the help of a female broker or through online dating is distinct from trafficked women.

¹⁵¹ Aspiring migrants considered money paid to brokers for visa issuance in the same logic as the money they pay to consular officials for visa fees. So when this money is paid, the visa ought not to be denied. For example in Alpes, (2013d)

From the family's perspective, migration brokers "help" migrants to achieve their dream of mobility, but from the state perspectives, migration brokers are 'illegals'. It is from this binary perspective that Faist, (2014: 43) asserts that the work of migration brokers can also be understood through the framework of what he calls the moral economy of migration brokerage.

There are two methods used by brokers to make migration possible for their clients as identified by Minghua, (2012: 216). He asserts that brokers send-off migrants in groups and as individuals. In the former case, these migrants are 'exported' as migrant workers, mostly working in construction and other types of jobs e.g. security guards, or other menial jobs such as cleaners. In the latter case, brokers send-off migrants as individuals to go and 'huzzle' abroad. It is to this latter category that most migration brokers in Cameroon belong.

Brokers provide different services to their clients including training on what to expect and how to respond to visa interview questions in cases where clients need to be present at an embassy for visa interviewing. This is especially the case for American DV lottery winners who need the interference of a broker to complete their DV process¹⁵². Interview tips provided can also include how to respond

study, the husband of an aspiring migrant lamented that embassy officials are thieves who are only interested in taking money from people: "why do they take the money and not give the visas..." (he asked). He made this statement after paying a huge amount for visa application fee yet his wife didn't get the visa (pg.145-146). To this informant, the fact that embassies charge high amounts for visa application fees means that visas are like commodities that can be bought and not only to be seen as a legal document authorizing someone to travel and stay in another country.

¹⁵² The minimum educational requirement for American Diversity Visa (DV) lottery winners is GCE Advance (high school certificate) in the Anglophone educational system and Baccalauréat in the Francophone system. In addition to the educational requirement, DV winners have to meet all the requirements by answering with 'all honesty' all the questions asked during interviews including having a clean medical record. Sometimes there are some DV winners who can't afford the money needed to pay for the visa fees and the medical exams. The amount requested is about 500, 000FCFA, (about 1000CHF) sometimes even more. Many DV winners can't afford this high amount. So in this case, they look for someone to arrange a paper wedding. This new 'wife' or 'husband' becomes the sponsor; s/he incurs all the financial expenses related to the migration project.

to police questioning at a border point or how to behave in front of police and other state officials during departure and arrival.

Migration brokers in Cameroon can be divided into formal and informal brokers. The former are migration agencies, which often have offices where aspiring migrants can go register as clients and/or seek for any information regarding their migration project. Because formal brokers are registered agencies, they often carry out huge publicity on the local newspapers, television, and radio stations to advertise their services. The latter are informal brokers who have no formally registered offices. Most often, they are individuals with connections in Cameroon and abroad. They use their connections to make mobility possible for their clients. Their services are made known orally or through flyers posted on the streets in the towns and cities.

Due to inadequate knowledge on the legal frameworks of transnational migration for many in Cameroon¹⁵³, it is not uncommon to see that experienced family members and bosses who have travelled abroad intervene as ‘migration facilitators/helpers’ depending on their knowledge on the situation at hand. For example when my cousins were applying for their migration to Canada, I had to help them with information on filling out the forms. This was also the case when they were shortlisted for visa interviews. I coached them on what to say and how to respond to questions being asked. I had applied for this Canadian immigration project before so my previous knowledge was helpful during their visa interviews. When my cousins finally got their visas, one of them called me to thank me saying had it not been for the coaching I gave them, they wouldn’t have made it¹⁵⁴. These were his exact words:

In order to get all the required documents e.g. passport, married certificate, and other relevant documents, these applicants sometimes seek the services of a broker. Before the visa interview date, the broker also coaches these clients on how to respond to interview questions. See also Piot, (2010) for more information on brokering DV lottery migration in the case of Togo.

¹⁵³ Alpes, (2012) describes this as the economy of migratory knowledge in Cameroon.

¹⁵⁴ My cousins travelled through the Quebec skilled immigration scheme.

“Chris, had it not been for the ideas you gave us, I don’t think we would have made it. They were very useful from the time of application up to the interview. These are things I would never have thought of, so I would have been stuck and probably the answers I would have given would not be the right answers. Sometimes those people they ask you very tricky questions; the questions are asked in a way that if you are not careful you can miss it. Sometimes only fear and panic can make you to lose it. Thank you again”.

I am also helping friends with information relating to their studies abroad, including helping with research proposals for graduate programs. For those schools requiring payment of application fee, I help friends and other family members to pay given that most of them don’t have bank accounts, plus the fact that my European bank cards will easily be accepted. What I do to family and friends free of charge are part of the migration brokerage services for which brokers are paid to deliver. Me too I did seek for help from my former boss when I was stuck with my bushfaling program to Sweden in 2008.

I applied for a master scholarship in Lund University in Sweden. The application process was online, and all fields mark with asterisks (*) were compulsory. Applicants were supposed to fill in all three names: first name, middle name and family name. Unfortunately I only have two names; my father’s name does not appear in any of my official documents. In order to get to the next stage of my application, I had to include a family name which is my father’s name. When my acceptance letter for admission and scholarship was sent to me, all three names were mentioned, that is Christina Atekmangoh Che whereas on my passport, only the first two were mentioned.

Now there was a problem. I was stuck and wasn’t sure of what to do. The fear of me getting my visa application rejected for names incompatibility urged me to sought advice from my boss whom I shall call Maya. Being a European researcher working on transnational African migration, she advised me on how to manage the situation including sending an email to the scholarship authorities for the names to be changed and a new copy of the acceptance letter sent to the Swedish consulate in Cameroon. This was how I got my visa to travel. Much as one might not consider Maya to be a migration

broker in the strict sense of the word, the help she offered me is just an example of the many different ways in which migration brokerage takes place. Sometimes the fear of getting a visa application turned down for many aspiring migrants urged them to seek the services of migration brokers. This example and the trajectories of my informants in the subsequent sections confirm that documentation is one of the main important tasks for migration brokers, for having the right documents are what make transnational migration possible. By documentation, I mean all the necessary documents that make mobility possible, that is passport, bank statements, marriage certificates, visas, to cite a few. As Alpes, (2013b: 6-9) confirms, travel documents have power, and the credibility of migration brokers in Cameroon lies in their ability to produce such documents. Moreover, the difficulty to get visas to travel to countries in the global North from many in countries in the global South has led to increase demand for the services of migration brokers. It is in this line of thought that Kyle and Liang (2001: 421) affirm that, migration brokers have the resources to move people, documents, and money across transnational barriers.

For this study, I conducted research with three formal agencies and two informal (individual brokers). Some of these formal migration agencies ‘help’ mostly students interested in studying abroad. Some of them have partnerships with institutions abroad. In what follows, I start with a background on migration brokerage in Cameroon and later examine the works of some individual brokers and one migratory agency. Next, I examine the relationships between brokers and their clients in terms of how they transform an individual into a migrant and finally investigate some of the challenges faced by brokers in Cameroon and how they deal with them.

Background on migration brokerage in Cameroon

On Wednesday April 27th 2016 at 8.32pm CET, I received a call from one of my maternal cousins Lumsi. She began, “hello, Mangoh. I am calling to inform you that your brother (actually my cousin) Titus has gotten a Schengen visa. He will be coming next week. He will first go to Poland, and then he will join you in Switzerland where

he will seek an asylum...” I was surprised with this sudden news for I had no clue that Titus was pursuing a Schengen ‘line’. Without even reflecting, I said, “oh really? How did he get the visa?” I asked. “What sort of stupid question are you asking like that”, Lumsi shouted at me. Then she continued, “instead of you to be rejoicing that your brother has gotten a Schengen visa, you are there asking stupid questions. What do you mean by how did he get the visa. How do people get visas... I am telling you he will be coming, just so you know, so that you can pick him up from the airport.”¹⁵⁵ Seeing how angry Lumsi was, I apologized for having asked such a ‘stupid’ question, but she didn’t wait to listen to my apology, she hung up the phone. 20 minutes later, I received another call from my biological elder brother saying, “Mangoh, Lumsi has just called me complaining that she told you Titus is coming and you are acting as if you don’t want him to fall bush. She told me the way you responded was as if you were not happy with the news...” I explained to my brother that “it’s not as if I don’t want him to come, I only asked how he got the visa and she got upset”. My brother explained that, he was told that Titus had some savings from a business he was doing and one of my aunts¹⁵⁶ added some money and they gave it to a broker. The money demanded was 2.5 million FCFA. They paid the initial instalment of 1.5 million, with payment to be completed when the visa was out.

The following day, I called Lumsi and apologized, then explained that I am worried about Titus coming to Switzerland to seek asylum. “This country is quite tough, they don’t grant asylum to Cameroonians irrespective of whatever story he might come up with. They only grant asylum to Syrians...” I suggested that he tried another European country and he should call me once he has bought his flight. A month later, I didn’t hear anything neither from Lumsi nor from Titus. I called Lumsi and she said the broker did not want to deliver the passport. That Titus has been putting him under pressure and they ended up having a fight. To cut a long story short, I called again on July 5th and was told that Titus was in Morocco,

¹⁵⁵ Lumsi lived in Switzerland for more than five years undocumented before returning to Cameroon when her husband fell sick.

¹⁵⁶ Titus’ mum died some years back and his father re-married so the elder sister of Titus mum has been taking care of him.

intending to enter Europe through Spain across the Mediterranean. Lumsi explained that Titus said he had already made up his mind to go and no one could stop him. Titus travelled to Morocco by land, passing through the desert to Algeria and then to Morocco. On August 30th 2016 I received a call from Lumsi saying that Titus has called that he was in Spain. She gave me a number through which I could reach him. I called the number on September 5th 2016 but the phone wasn't Titus', he was using his friend's phone. He explained to me that they came by boat. They were about 68 of them from different African countries. They each paid an equivalent of 1000 Euros to be transported by boat from Morocco. During the journey, the engine of their boat suddenly stopped in the middle of the sea. They were almost drowning but were rescued by a bigger boat that was sailing by. They are now under police custody in Spain. I offered to send him some money and to visit him later but he asked me to wait until they could be given a permit to move around because for the time being, he doesn't have any identification papers with him.

I have used this anecdote as a way to open up the discussion on migration brokerage in Cameroon. People want to leave by any means; as a result, there is a proliferation of migration brokerage networks. Brokers can deliver a 'full package', that is, from applying for passport and producing all required documents that would enable him get the visa for his client. Or they can deliver a 'half package' which means they might help an aspiring migrant to produce a document that is needed to get a visa (e.g. a bank statement). In the previous chapter, I have examined the enduring allure of migration from Cameroon instigated by its economic downturns. With the present economic conditions, developed countries embassies are aware that migration has become a popular escape route for many in Africa. Thus, they have put in place many measures that have hugely restricted the delivery of visas¹⁵⁷ making the services of migration

¹⁵⁷ Pecoud, (2013: 1) describes this practice as the disciplining of migration which is attainable through the militarisation of borders and/or the surveillance of immigrants. In these modes of border militarisation and surveillance, migrant receiving countries have invented new technologies and tactics to establish a migration order (Geiger, 2013). These disciplinary tactics are often gendered. For example Alpes, (2014a: 245-246) shows in her study that visa interviews at the French consulate in Yaoundé tend to provide different access to migration to men

brokers even much needed. For example during an interview with the Cameroon ambassador to Switzerland in Bern, I learnt that since 2009, the Swiss embassy stopped issuing long term study visas to Cameroonians with the exception of those on scholarship. The reason for this action was that many Cameroonians who went to Switzerland as students abandoned school, but stayed in the country so the Swiss government had to take some measures to redress the situation. But as the ambassador explained to me, the two countries are working together to find a better sustainable solution.

After being issued a contract to work as an aupair, it wasn't possible for the sister of a friend of mine to get an appointment for a long term visa to Germany. Checking on the website of the embassy in Yaoundé in July and August 2015, there were no available dates for appointment until April 2016, and even then there was no assurance that it would be possible to have one. Given such situations, so many have resorted to the services of brokers who have the powers to sometimes circumvent the rules through their connections. While state authorities such as embassy officials will

and women wanting to migrate to France. The marriages of Cameroonian women to French men are often considered as fake. These married women have to prove during visa interviews that they are truly in love with their French spouses and not merely seeking means to migrate and send home remittances. From my experience, to test if these women are truly in love, consulate staff during interviews often asked intimate questions e.g. how often they communicate, when was the last time they saw each other, where does the husband work, how much does he earns, when was the last time they made love, what does their bedroom looks like, to cite a few examples. A friend of mine was asked to sign an undertaking that she will never divorce her white husband, otherwise her citizenship status would be revoked.

refer to them as ‘doki men’¹⁵⁸, individual [aspiring] migrants and families described them as ‘big men’¹⁵⁹.

In August 2008, I was at the US embassy in Cameroon as part of my research assistant job. Coincidentally, there was a press conference organized at the US embassy. In his presentation, one of the staff from the consular section of the embassy stressed on the fact that visa applicants needed to keep away from ‘doki men’,—“they can ruin your future, they are just out to make money”, he said. In reality, I have seen cases where migration brokers actually facilitated a migration project, from the passport, to the visa application, and even in purchasing the flight tickets. Still, there are

¹⁵⁸ The word ‘doki’ men come from the word ‘doki’ which is a pidgin word and a short form of the word document. Embassy officials stigmatized migration brokers as ‘doki men’ in the sense that, for them, they are fake people (con men) who are only interested in making money. Hence visa applicants are warned to keep away from them. It is also important to note here that all brokers can be ‘doki men’ but not all ‘doki men’ are brokers. The latter are those who specialises in the production of various forms of ‘fake’ documents but they do not send people abroad. For example the town of Kumba in South West Cameroon was known to be the centre for ‘doki’ work. Kumba ‘doki’ is the phrase often used in Anglophone Cameroon to describe fake documents. ‘Doki men’ who are not brokers do not work with the competent authorities. All they do is to get the original of a document and produce a fake one. For example they can get a copy of an original marriage certificate and produce a fake one (which is often hard to distinguish from the original) for someone who needs it. The American embassy for example often sends local staff to the various municipalities, ministries, and offices to check for the duplicates of all certificates and documents submitted at the embassy by visa applicants. It is in such cases that the fake documents produced by ‘doki men’ can be identified whereas those produced by brokers are not because brokers work with competent authorities who have connections. While embassy officials group brokers and ‘doki men’ into one category, aspiring migrants differentiate between ‘doki men’ and brokers (brokers are described as those-who-help-people-to-fall-bush). Unlike ‘doki men’, brokers also engage in ‘doki’ work but they use their connection to get legal but ‘fake’ document from the competent authorities. For instance to get a bank statement for his client, the broker might pay the bank manager to open a bank account indicating that this client has a huge sum of money which is not true.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Big men’ are ‘powerful’ men with high connections locally and even internationally. They can be top business men and/or politicians with well-established social connections which allow them to circumvent the red tapism that is emblematic of bureaucratic Cameroonian state. ‘Big men’ uses their connections to get whatever they want be it a document, a government contract, a business deal, to cite a few (Bayart 1993, Alpes 2011, 2013c, Konings 2012).

instances where money for a migration project was given to a broker and the applicant never got the visa. Let me illustrate how this migration brokerage takes place:

A family decides that A or B should travel abroad. Sometimes they have no idea which country their son or daughter should go. But they have heard from friends or from the local radio advertisements that there is a migration agency in this or that city where people go to fall bush, and the amount of money requested. The family raised the money and then goes to see the migration broker. Depending on how much money the family has, the broker decides which country the client should travel to. Most often, the broker has a number of countries where he sends off migrants. Euro-American countries are usually expensive compared to other countries in Asia, or to Dubai, or South Africa (to cite a few examples). Time is an important factor when it comes to migration brokerage which is why when brokers advertise their services, they inform clients how long it would take to get the visas for each different “line” (see an example of a broker’s flyer in appendix 11, photo 6).

At the time of my work in one of these agencies, a “line” to Canada costed six millions francs CFA (about 12000 Swiss francs). To raise money for migration, some families sometimes sell their land, or offer their houses as collateral in order to get a loan from a bank. The amount paid for a “line” may sometimes include flight tickets, sometimes not, and sometimes more money is demanded. If the client does not have a passport, the broker will help to apply for a passport for him/her. The broker organizes all required documents and applies for the visa. In some cases, he succeeds to get the visa, in other cases, he doesn’t. If the visa is denied, and if the client had paid the entire amount that was demanded by the broker, the broker deducts his running costs (the expenses that he incurred) and reimburse the client. In other cases, the client and the broker can renegotiate and the broker sends him/her to another country.

From my experience, the reimbursements are often marked by conflicts especially if the broker failed to meet up with the due date. In some cases where the visa application does not incurred a lot of expenses, the broker arranges with the family to pay him only when the visa is issued. In this case, he uses his own money to follow up

the process. Usually the amount the broker will charge the family after the visa is secured will cover up for what he spent plus the remuneration for his work.

The broker usually has a network of friends in the selected countries where he sends off migrants. Sometimes these are migrants who had travelled with the same broker and now are well established in the destination country. This means that if the visa is granted, there will be someone to pick up the newly arrived at the airport upon arrival. The broker's role ends once the client has arrived at the destination. It is now up to the migrant to sort out his residency status. Usually, these migrants travel with tourist visas. In the case of Schengen member countries, they can have a three-month visa. If the migrant is deported due to his/her visa expiration, it is his/her fault and the broker is not concerned.

Informal migration brokers and their “lines”

Informal brokers are individual brokers who do not have formal offices. Their services are not registered, information about their existence is spread orally and/or through flyers such as this:

TRAVEL-WORK-STUDY

Work and study opportunities in the following countries:

Dubai, Kuwait, Thailand (waiting time 2 weeks)

Cyprus (waiting time 3 days)

Note: charges are paid after the visa is issued.

Study in the following countries:

Cyprus, Canada, United Kingdom, China.

Apply for Canadian permanent residence

Other services include sale of flight tickets, issue of bank statements for foreign universities abroad.

The emergence of Mr. Bix as a migration broker

Mr Bix is an individual broker in Bamenda. I got his contact in one of his flyers that were posted on the streets in Bamenda. Mr. Bix is a young man in his early 40s who is a business man as well as a

broker. He buys electronics and cars from Dubai and sells them in Cameroon. He uses one of his rooms in his apartment as his broker office. Mr Bix and I first sat in a bar and after we had drinks while talking, he told me that he has an office where he securely keeps the files of his clients. After our drinks, we drove to Mr. Bix house in his Toyota Corolla car. Mr. Bix office is a side-room in his one apartment house. It has a desk top, an office chair, a sofa, a bench, and files where he keeps clients documents. There was so much dust on his computer and the entire room, as if no one ever sits inside. Mr. Bix told me he doesn't use the computer because it is bad, he uses his lap top that was a gift from one of his clients who is now doing well in China.

Mr Bix original 'line' was Dubai. As a business man, he made some contacts with some African friends he met in Dubai. After 5 years and following his frequent travels there, he decided to enter the broker business. His first client was a friend of his cousin. He made documents that showed that this client (Eric) was his business partner and that they were travelling together for business. To do this, he created a bank account for Eric and made false documents that said Eric was a big business man with a big financial capital. With these documents, he was able to get a Dubai visa for him. While in Dubai, Eric got a job as a security guard and the security company he worked with applied for his work permit. After two years in Dubai, Eric and Mr Bix started working together. Eric would pick up newly arrived migrants that travelled through Mr Bix and host them for about two months. During this time, he will show them around the city and possible places to get employment. A 'line' for Dubai costed between 500 thousand to 1 million FCFA, excluding flight tickets. The price varies according to the needs of the client. For example if a client has a university degree, is in possession of a passport, and is sure to buy his/her flight ticket through a colleague of Mr. Bix, then the money the client has to pay will be less. On the other hand, if Mr Bix has to apply for the passport of the client, the price is higher. And this depends also on the type of passport. If the client needs an

“urgent passport”¹⁶⁰, that is a passport that should be made available within 3 working days, the client will pay more.

A ‘normal passport’ takes between 2 weeks to 7 weeks. A passport in Cameroon costs 50,000FCFA. This is the stated government price¹⁶¹. On the other hand, an ‘urgent passport’ can cost up to 500,000 FCFA. Part of this money is to be used to bribe the various officials in the passport office so that it can be out within the shortest time possible—3 to 7 working days maximum. Moreover, in ‘complicated’ cases, the passport fee can be higher. These are for example individuals who have tried to fall bush before with another name and didn’t succeed. In such cases, the money paid can go up to 500, 000 or more. This is because it costs a lot to bribe the staff working in the passport office for the previous information to be deleted from the system otherwise the machines will detect fraud and a new passport cannot be delivered¹⁶². Mr. Bix told me that he has a friend who works in the central police station in Bamenda and that friend has a colleague at the delegation of national security in Yaoundé. Through these various contacts, Mr. Bix told me he is able to get an ‘urgent passport’ within 3 working days. Mr. Bix told me: “all what matters is money, money at hand, services delivered. This

¹⁶⁰ Within the brokerage networks, people talk about “urgent/fast passport” and “normal passport”. The former is delivered quickly, sometimes within three working days (but the applicant must have connections to get this) while the latter takes the normal time which is between 4-7 weeks depending on which city or town the person resides. Applicants can apply for passports at the regional headquarters or in the capital city, Yaoundé. If the passport is made in Yaoundé, it takes between 2-4 weeks. But at the regional level, it takes longer. Hence as I write further, I will be talking about urgent passport and normal passport which is how it is locally referred to.

¹⁶¹ Information circulating in local newspapers in Cameroon says that the government intends to increase the price of passport from 50,000 to 75000FCFA.

¹⁶² Following a new EU regulation that was issued in June 2006, everyone travelling to, or in transit within the EU must be in possession of a biometric passport (the US also introduced the same passport rule) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-06-872_en.htm?locale=en (accessed 13.07.2016). Hence from 2007 onwards, the old non-biometric passport in Cameroon was no longer being printed. Those who were in possession of these passports had up to December 31 2009 to apply for the new bio-metric computerised passport.

country has become one in which you can get anything you want. You just need to have money and connection”¹⁶³.

I smiled and echoed that: “it means you are a big man”. Mr Bix smiled back, then he replied that:

“Why do you speak like someone one who does not know this country? Are you a stranger? You know how things are. And besides this is our own way to help these young people. It is better for these young people to go out and ‘huzzle’ than to stay here in Cameroon and turned into arm robbers. When someone is hungry and jobless, the temptations are many. It is better that they go out there and struggle to better their lives and that of their families. When you go around town, you will see that some of the nicest buildings here are built by bushfallers... The most important thing is to leave this country. When you are well established, you might decide to return after some years and maybe start a business”.

In addition to Dubai, Mr. Bix has also a ‘line’ to other Asian countries like China and Thailand, and to the Gulf States of Kuwait. Beside these, he also sends people to Cyprus. Clients to China and Thailand are both male and female; they travelled to go and teach English in primary schools¹⁶⁴ while clients to Kuwait and Qatar who are mostly men travel to work in building and construction companies. Female clients to Kuwait and Qatar travel to work as

¹⁶³ Original text in Pidgin English: “na dough be the matter. Money for hand, bag for ground. This kontri don be na one way you fit get all things wey you want-am. You just need for get dough and for get connection”.

¹⁶⁴ I asked Mr Bix whether he knows how much his clients who teach English in China and Thailand earns but he didn’t know. All he told me was that: “over there, they pay well. For any little thing you do, it is well paid unlike here in Cameroon”. My cousin in China who teaches English told me she earns an equivalent of 500,000FCFA (about 1000CHF). She has an apartment that is provided for her by the school. She told me that there are schools that pay less, it just depends where you are. With this money, she has renovated her parents’ house in Douala and she sponsors her four younger siblings to school including taking care of her parents. A friend of mine who teaches English in Thailand earns an equivalent of 250,000FCFA (about 500CHF) a month.

domestic servants¹⁶⁵ while clients to Cyprus travel to ‘huzzle’. Apart from Dubai, Mr Bix has never been to any of the countries he sends migrants to. But he told me he was planning a trip to China. The prices for China, Thailand, Cyprus, Kuwait, and Qatar ‘lines’ are similar to that of Dubai. Mr Bix does not have a written record of his clients but he told me that over the years, he has been able to send 8 people to Dubai, 5 to China, 6 to Thailand, and 1 to Qatar. Out of the 8 people to Dubai, there were 6 men and 2 women, for China there were 3 women and 2 men, for Thailand there were 4 women and 2 men, and Qatar, it was a man. Because there were no written accounts of clients, I couldn’t verify whether this information was accurate.

The most expensive lines are for Canada and United Kingdom. Although Mr. Bix told me that he can also send people to these two countries, he hasn’t (at least for the time being) sent anyone there. These ‘lines’ cost between 6-8 million FCFA and the waiting time is much longer, it can take between 6 months to 1 year and even more. Mr Bix explained to me that Canadian and British ‘lines’ are more expensive because “there are so many thorns on these paths and one

¹⁶⁵However, there have been many stories and testimonies of how Cameroonian and other African female migrant workers are being maltreated in Kuwait. See for example <http://crtv.cm/fr/latest-news/top-news-24/kuwait-young-cameroonian-girls-ill-treated-worse-than-animals-15029.htm>. Recently, a video was published online in which three returning Cameroonian girls from Kuwait shared their heart-breaking stories <http://www.cameroononline.org/3-cameroonian-girls-returned-from-kuwait-today-and-share-heartbreaking-stories-video/> (accessed 18.02.2016). Yet even with these painful stories, there are still many young people who are eager to go to these countries. This is because migration failures in Cameroon are understood in terms of luck. If A goes and does not succeed, it was his/her bad luck. The failure of migrant A in any country does not deter an aspiring migrant B from wanting to travel. As a matter of fact, Pelican and Tatah, (2009) study attests that with increasing immigration closures in Europe, the Gulf States and Asia especially China and other African countries have also become major destination countries for Cameroonian migrants. Nonetheless migration to these countries is just the first step to go further afield. As one migration broker told me, “the most important thing is first to leave this country, from there you can find your way out to other countries”. A friend confirms that, “Europe is the highest, we in Asia are just working money to find other ways out. Once you get to Europe or to America, then you have arrived!” My cousin who taught English in China for about 5 years left in June 2016 and is now based in the US.

would need to pay so much to pave his way”. He further explained that, the bureaucracy to get to these countries is quite complex, nonetheless “l'impossible n'est pas camerounais”¹⁶⁶ (and he laughs). Mr. Bix told me he already has a Turkish visa for one of his clients, but this client really wants to go to Belgium. Mr. Bix has applied for a transit visa to Belgium for this client. The idea is that, once the client gets to Belgium, he will ‘disappear’ at the airport. He knows someone in Belgium who can pick up the client from the airport in Brussels. If the migrant finally gets his transit visa to Belgium, he will pay Mr. Bix an additional 1.5million FCFA to the initial sum of 1 million FCFA that he already paid. Mr Bix took out the SN Brussels flight ticket that he had bought for the client and showed it to me. Then he said: “I bought this with my own money. So if he gets the transit visa, he will reimburse my money for the flight ticket. This explains why the client will need to add 1.5 million FCFA. So you see, when I take people’s money, I deliver the service, I cannot eat someone’s money”. At this point, Mr. Bix asked me which country I was interested in¹⁶⁷. I said I wasn’t interested in travelling, but my brother was. I am only a student on research, I reiterated.

The relationship between informal migration brokers and their clients

As we have seen above, informal brokers work with other intermediaries (his connections) to make mobility possible for his clients. As Alpes, (2011: 90) confirms, connections are everything a broker needs. It is only through connections that brokers can help young people achieve their dream of a better life abroad. The case of

¹⁶⁶ “Impossible n'est pas camerounais” is a popular adage in Cameroon that loosely translates to, and means that nothing is impossible for a Cameroonian to achieve or to do.

¹⁶⁷ Before the interview, I did introduce myself to Mr Bix as a student researching on Cameroonian migration and remittances so the work that they as migration brokers do is relevant for my study. Actually the word migration broker does not have a direct translation in Pidgin English. So when I said my name and introduced my research, I said that I was interested to interview persons who ‘help’ people to fall bush like him. During our discussion, we spoke Pidgin English and English.

Nchuding, Cynthia, and Celestine below exemplify the relationship between informal brokers and their clients and depict some of the various tactics that brokers use to meet the demands of their clients.

‘Falling bush’ through informal brokers: transforming an aspiring migrant to a migrant

The case of Nchuding

Nchuding was a student in one of the Cameroonian universities. Through a friend, he heard that there was a “line” to travel to Denmark. It was a group of people travelling to attend an intensive course there. The broker found out from a friend that there was a training course on natural resource management offered to professionals in this field. The broker applied as a representative from Cameroon who was to travel with his co-workers.

The idea here was not to attend the course per se, but using the course as a means to get the visa. The broker himself never went to attend the course but rather chose to send his ‘representatives’. Through network of friends, this “line” was known by a good number of people. One of the guys who had enrolled for the course didn’t have the money to pay the broker so he was dropped out of the program. Hearing this, Nchuding hurriedly told his parents about it and the money was raised. It was 4 million FCFA (about 8000 CHF) which included money for ‘urgent’ passport, hotel reservation, flight ticket, and the broker’s fee. Nchuding explained to me that his parents could only afford 20 percent; the rest (80 percent) was borrowed.

With this money, the broker was able to get a three-week visa to Denmark. At the end of the course, Nchuding moved to Sweden to seek asylum, but his asylum claim was rejected after waiting for 5 years. He was about to be deported to Cameroon so he relocated to Norway and stayed undocumented for two years, then returned to Sweden to pursue his asylum claim and this time, he was finally granted the right to stay after two years.

Cynthia and her broker

Cynthia, 37 years, is a Cameroonian migrant who has been living undocumented in Switzerland for 8 years. She left Cameroon in 2007 through a migration broker. I met Cynthia through a friend who attends the same church. Through a friend of a friend, Cynthia heard that a new 'line' has just been opened for Switzerland. The migration broker charged 3 million FCFA (approx. 6 thousand CHF) excluding flight tickets. An advance fee of 1.5 million FCFA was paid and the rest completed when the visa was obtained as per the agreement between the broker and Cynthia's family. The money for Cynthia's migration project was a contribution from her family, her husband, and her husband's parents. With the advance fee paid, Cynthia got a three months visa for Switzerland. Since Switzerland was not a Schengen member country then¹⁶⁸, the only airlines that was convenient was Swiss air. Taking another airline will mean applying for a transit visa which will incur additional costs. Besides, there was no guarantee that a transit visa would be granted.

In order to get the visa, the broker made 'fake' documents to show that Cynthia was a member of his NGO who was travelling to Switzerland for a meeting. After all the savings had been spent to pay for the visa, there wasn't anything left to immediately purchase the flight ticket. Cynthia had to wait for two months so that money could be mobilized to purchase it. Left with a one month visa, the money for flight tickets was quickly mobilized and given to the broker; it was actually money Cynthia's husband borrowed so that the ticket could be bought before the visa expired. The broker bought the flight ticket from a friend who runs a travel agency in Douala. To avoid questioning at the airport, the broker advised Cynthia to be properly dressed before boarding the airplane, preferably in suit to show she was coming for a meeting since she now only had two weeks before the visa expires. "The police at Zurich airport are very racist", the broker cautioned; "so you will have to be smart to go through", he advised. Cynthia's children aged 7 and 4 had to move to stay with her

¹⁶⁸ Switzerland became a Schengen member state in 2008 although it was in March 2009 that the free movement of persons became operational as per the Schengen agreement (Swissinfo.ch, <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/switzerland-s-schengen-entry-finally-complete/653802>) accessed 07.04.2015

mother-in-law. Cynthia and her husband are both from the Southwest region of Cameroon.

In the case of Cynthia, we can see that the strategy used by her broker to obtain her visa was to produce a 'fake' document to show that Cynthia works for his NGO. What also came out clear are the blur lines between what is legal (or real) and what is illegal (or fake). For instance, in reality the NGO exists, but the document to prove that Cynthia works for this NGO was 'fake'. Nonetheless, in the end, she got a legal visa that allowed her to travel. As Kalir, (2012: 27-28) confirms, when it comes to migration brokerage, there is no clear cut distinction between what is 'legal' and what is not in relation to the work of brokers. What is even more evident is that there is some form of brokerage at different levels in the course of transforming an individual to a migrant including in transforming an undocumented migrant into a documented migrant. This is especially so in the case of Celestine to which I turn next.

Celestine gets a student visa

Celestine is from the North West region of Cameroon and I knew him before I travelled to Sweden for my studies. Celestine is 30 years old and is the third in a family of seven children. He has one stepbrother (same father, different mother) whom he never met. Celestine told me his father had attempted to introduce this stepbrother to him but his mum doesn't even want to hear it because according to her, Celestine's father is a cheat.

Through my mum, I learnt that Celestine was in Ukraine so I contacted his sister who gave me his telephone number. Celestine left Cameroon five years ago for Ukraine. Before leaving, he was doing some petty business dealing with electronics. After high school, Celestine's parents couldn't afford to send him to a Cameroonian university. Besides, "going to university in Cameroon is a waste of time; rather than for my parents to use the little they have to send me to university in Cameroon, it is better they save the money for me to fall bush", he added. Obviously, his family didn't have much money and Celestine didn't have the motivation to attend university in Cameroon. Her elder sister in China sent him some money to start up a business. With the business he was doing, he was able to help

his parents financially from time to time at home. He joined a ‘njangi’ (tontine) where he contributed 10,000FCFA every Sunday.

Celestine’s friend in Thailand called him one afternoon and in the course of their discussion, he said he knew someone that can ‘work a line’ to Ukraine. The friend in Thailand got this information from his brother in Cameroon. When he informed Celestine about this ‘line’, Celestine was very excited and immediately talked to his parents. With the savings he had from the ‘njangi’, he was able to get a normal passport. The money needed for the journey was 2 million FCFA excluding flight ticket (about 4000CHF). Celestine does not know all the details on how the broker processed his documents. All he knows is that at the end he had a student visa to Ukraine. The broker was responsible to produce the documents that were needed to get the visa, amongst these documents was a bank statement that showed that he (Celestine) had the required amount of money to cover for his tuition and living expenses in Ukraine for one year.

Part of the money for the migration project was a contribution from her sister in China, part of it was through the sale of a piece of land, and a tiny portion from her mum’s ‘njangi’.

I visited Celestine’s parents in Cameroon when I went home for field work. As I got off from a motorbike, Samantha (Celestine’s mum) walked towards me to help me with my bag. There was construction work going on beside the house of Celestine’s parents. “Mama are you people building this one for rents?” I asked. “No, it is not ours”, that is the piece of land that we sold so that Celestine could travel to Whiteman kontri. There was no way for us, and the only thing we could do was to sell this land so that he can go”, Samantha replied. As we sat down to eat, I asked Samantha: “So what do you think about this decision? I mean the decision to sell this land”. She replied that:

“It was a good decision, when Celestine told us about this program, me and his father discussed and saw that it was worth it. There is no life here in Cameroon, so it was better for him to go out. We don’t regret anything for selling this land because we know that he will one day buy more lands. That little business that he was doing here in Cameroon was just to pass time. It was just to keep him busy”.

“What about if you would have sold the land and give him the money to invest more in his business?” I asked. Even before I could finish my sentence, Samantha was already nodding her head in refusal, and then she said: “doing business here in Cameroon is a waste of time. There is no guarantee, he cannot succeed. It is better for him to go abroad and struggle than to stay here in the name of doing business. What kind of profitable business can he do compared to going abroad? What if his business fails, what will he do? We cannot risk selling our land for a project like that”, she noted.

“So you will rather sell the land for him to go abroad?” I probed. “Yes”, Samantha replied loudly. Then she continued that:

“The truth is that when he goes abroad, even if it is that bad, he can always try to succeed or to find his way out. He will try to do something that will compensate for the land that we sold. And we were right. Even though he hasn’t gotten his papers yet, look at what he has been able to do. You see these tiles here and the one in the bathroom (she pointed to the veranda and toilet), he is the one who sent money to do all this work. Even the taxi his father is using, he is the one who bought it. So you see what I mean. Whiteman kontri e fine (Whiteman country is good). But he told me that he is working on his papers and it will be out quite soon”, she concluded.

Looking at these three case studies, it is evident that raising money for migration project sometimes involve borrowing and selling of properties. It also tells of the different ways that brokers deliver their services. For Nchuding, he was travelling as a delegate for a training course. Cynthia travelled as an NGO representative for a conference in Switzerland, and Celestine travelled as a student. But more importantly, these narratives show that brokerage exists at different levels. For example at the level of Cameroon, the broker is interested to have the visa that allows his client to travel, whatever happens next is none of his business. Arriving at the country, migrants tend to rely on some form of brokerage to legalise their stay¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶⁹ See for example chapter 8, section 8.3 for the case of Celestine who relied on a broker in Ukraine to legalise his stay.

Moreover, what we get from these narratives is that families will prefer to borrow money and sell properties to pay a broker for the migration of their son or daughter but will not do the same for any investment in Cameroon. Celestine's mum pointed out that doing business in Cameroon was a waste of time, besides being too risky. "What if the business fails?" (was the question she posed). However, she didn't ask the same question when giving money to the broker for Celestine's migration project. Following Alpes, (2011), migration is understood in terms of risks and gains. In comparison with staying home, the gains accrued from taking the risks to migrate through a broker is more than the gains that might emerge from a business in Cameroon. While investments in migration brokers can be consider risky, to not have a family member abroad also constitute a risk for families in Cameroon (Alpes,2013c: 13).

Thus, what matters most for both the aspiring migrant and his/her family is whether the dream of transnational migration can be realised. They are not concerned with how the broker produces the needed travel permits. At the end of the day, if the individual travels abroad, that is all what is needed. Minghuan, (2012: 218-219) observed a similar pattern for Chinese aspiring migrants wanting to travel to the US through individual brokers. He noted that families are not concerned whether the means used by the broker to get the necessary travel permits were legal or illegal, or whether the papers are genuine or not. As long as their children can travel, that is all what families care about.

Formal migration brokers

Formal brokers are registered migration agencies. Sometimes they are registered as NGOs and Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) such as the brokers Alpes, (2011) studied¹⁷⁰. Formal migration

¹⁷⁰ Alpes, (2011) in her research studied two formal migration agencies in Cameroon. One of these known as INACOD (International Assistance for Community Development) was registered as an NGO and the other AALC (Africa Asia Learning Connection) was registered as a Common Initiative Group. INACOD had 26 staff and in the year 2008, this agency sent out 40-55 people (mainly to Dubai) from its office in Buea, South West Cameroon (Alpes, 2013b: 9).

agencies can also be local representatives of foreign [private] universities¹⁷¹. Although these agencies are referred to as formal brokers, they also go through the same or similar processes in terms of getting the necessary documentation for their clients. The credibility of these brokers, both formal and informal lies in their ability to produce the required documentation that allows clients to travel. Thus Alpes, (2013b: 9, 12) writes that their legitimacy as sources of travel documentation needs to be related in forms of regulation and paper production in the Cameroonian context. This is because “the production of travel documents is considered a question of ‘power’ rather than a question of legality precisely because access paths to legal migration are available only to the smallest section of the population”. In this section, I focused on COMINADA which is a migration agency that sends clients to Canada, but defined itself as an “international organization for certification”. COMINADA offers student visas, work visas, refugee visas, including short stay (visitors’ visa) as well as counselling services as shown in their flyer (see appendix 10) .

I visited COMINADA office in Douala and had an interview with one of their staff. I also phoned them when I was back in Switzerland and needed more information on their activities. COMINADA (Commissioner of Oaths for Canada) is an organization that specializes in ‘helping’ people wishing to migrate to Canada for studies, work, or business purposes. Its vision is to become the “leading swearing agencies and immigration to Canada”. It was created in 2003 (but became fully operational from 2006) by some Cameroonians¹⁷² with the approval of the Canadian High Commissioner in Cameroon. It works in partnership with the Canadian High Commissioner to Cameroon and its guiding

¹⁷¹ Such representatives do not think of themselves as migration agencies. They define their presence as local branches of foreign universities helping students interested in studying abroad.

¹⁷² I wanted to find out who were the founding fathers of COMINADA since this information is not on its website. I was told it was founded by some Cameroonians with the approval of the Canadian High Commissioner. I asked for their names but the receptionist told me: “Madam, it is not necessary... all you should know is that it is officially registered and approved by the governments of Cameroon and Canada...”

principles are: Esprit de conseil, Persévérance, Amour du travail¹⁷³. However, I was told that it does not receive funding from neither the Cameroonian nor Canadian government. In this light, it can be deduced that, first, COMINADA helps Canada makes sure that the qualification for Cameroonians who migrate to Canada are really what they present it. Secondly, it is helping Canadian universities to secure non-risky clients.

ETUDIANT AU CANADA : DOSSIER

1 CHEMISE+ 2ENVELOPPES KAKI A4/ PASSEPORT / C.N./ ACTE DE NAISSANCE/ DIPLOMES/ RELEVES DE NOTES/ BULLETINS DE NOTES (de la première en terminale bacheliers uniquement)/ C.V/ 2 à 3 LETTRES DE RECOMMANDATION +1 LETTRE DE MOTIVATION à partir de la licence/3 PHOTOCOPIES DE CHAQUE DOCUMENT +ORIGINAL/FRAIS POUR ETUDE DE DOSSIER = 5000F/ INSCRIPTION DANS 2 UNIVERSITES FRANCOPHONES= 150 000F/ INSCRIPTION DANS 2 UNIVERSITES ANGLOPHONES = 200 000F/O.C.E=250 000fcfa/ CAUTION POUR FRAIS DE SCOLARITE ET DE SUBSISTANCE =11 000 000 à 15 000 000F POUR UNE ANNEE/ FRAIS DE COMMISSION DE COMINADA=375 000F. DUREE : 06 MOIS pour l'obtention du visa. MERCI

Translation: study in Canada: file

1 folder + 2 kaki A4 envelopes, passport, national identity card, birth certificate, diplomas/transcripts (high school only), CV, 2 to 3 letters of motivation + 1 letter of motivation starting from bachelor, 3 photocopies of each document + originals. Fees for the study of documents=5000F, sign up in two francophone universities =150.000F, sign up in two Anglophone universities = 200.000F/OCE=250.000FCFA, caution for school fees plus subsistence = 11 to 15 million FCFA for one year, COMINADA handling fees = 375.000FCFA. Duration: 06 months to obtain the visa. Thank you.

Contents of a student application file with COMINADA

¹⁷³ COMINADA also carryout other activities e.g. information on their webpage says that « COMINADA (Commissaire à l'assermentation pour le Canada) est un organisme spécialisé dans la certification, la légalisation, la vérification et l'assermentation des documents officiels, étrangers et canadiens, ainsi que la promotion des partenariats d'investissement et de coopération entre canadiens et africains. COMINADA a pour vision de devenir le leader en Afrique centrale des organismes d'assermentation et d'immigration pour le Canada » (<http://www.africanbib.biz/company/cominada/>), (accessed 11.07.2016). However, this information does not appear on their flyer. What we see is that it helps Cameroonians wanting to migrate to Canada.

I first heard about COMINADA from one of my brothers who explained to me he was going there to find out information about their Canadian ‘lines’. A few weeks later, I visited COMINADA’s office in Douala after seeing so many commercials on TV advertising it. I called and was asked to come to their office in Douala. As I walked into the office, there were 7 boys, (one girl walked in just when I was leaving). It looks like most of them have just graduated or were about to graduate from the universities of Douala and Yaoundé judging from their conversation. They were all sitting on a sofa at the reception waiting for their turn to see the director of COMINADA Douala in his office. To meet with the director, people have to make an appointment after consulting the receptionist. Those who meet the director are those who have completed their files for the different services which COMINADA offers.

As I walked into the reception, I was given a flyer with the services they offer and the receptionist asked me which service I was interested in. I said, I wasn’t really, I was a student and was researching on Cameroonian migration and remittances so I was interested in what they do. Nonetheless I told her my brother was interested and would like to get more information about their programs. She explained to me the various programs, the amount to be paid and the time frames ranging from 6 months to two years. To be enrolled for any of their programs or services, applicants have to pay a registration fee of between 5000-10,000 FCFA.

In the case of students, once the fee has been paid, COMINADA offers ‘help’ with the visa application. Other information related to the Canadian permanent immigration scheme was explained to me and I was told to inform my brother to stop by one of their offices in Yaoundé, Douala or Bafoussam once he was ready. The student services are in two sessions—September and January. Interested student applicants have to first discuss with a COMINADA’s staff in one of their offices to let them know which programs they are interested in. Once this is sorted out, the student submits certified photocopies of their transcripts and diploma. The applicant also has to present originals of all official documents, for which one of COMINADA’s staff has to cross check with the photocopies. COMINADA applies for admission for the student. Institutions

include both public and private universities in Canada depending on which university offers the program the student is interested in.

Once the admission letter is out, the student pays on average 13 million FCFA (about 26000CHF) into a bank account that bears the student's name. The account is opened in Canada by COMINADA but the student does not have access to this account until s/he finally arrives in Canada. This money is to cover for tuition and accommodation for the first year. COMINADA applies for the visa which is never denied (I was told). In fact, payment of the requested 13 million FCFA means visa is guaranteed; no money, no visa! This money can be paid at once or in two instalments, but this should be done within the shortest time possible because COMINADA needs time to arrange for accommodation for the student. I was also told that the money can be more than 13 million FCFA depending on the amount to be paid as tuition for the program the student is interested in. As shown above in the student application file, the amount paid can go up to 15 million FCFA and this does not include money for admission application (between 150.000-200,000FCFA), verification of documents (5000FCFA), COMINADA handling fees (375000FCFA) and other charges. From the second year, the student is left by himself/herself. That means that s/he is responsible to look for accommodation in case the housing contract is not renewed as well as for the payment of the tuition demanded from that year and onwards. My brother told me that the brother of one of his classmates went to Canada through COMINADA 4 years ago, and "now he is doing fine there", he noted¹⁷⁴.

It seems that many people, especially Francophones are benefitting from the services offered by COMINADA. It was proven by their number the day I was there. As shown in the flyer, applicants are assured they can make Canada their home: "*COMINADA, make your home in Canada, one of the best countries in the world. CANADA offers a quality of life unlike any other country. With the knowledge, competence and*

¹⁷⁴ In 2015, Cameroon was the 2nd origin of foreign students from Sub-Saharan Africa to Canada with 1876 students http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/cameroon-cameroun/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/canada_cameroun-cameroun.aspx?lang=eng ,accessed 11.07.2016).

experience you have acquired, you can be able to make CANADA your permanent home. Qualified workers, students, immigrants, visitors, businessmen, qualified technicians, refugees...”

Beneath this caption are photos showing students at Canadian universities and one Canadian and Cameroonian men shaking hands. As with all migration agencies, trust is key; that is why COMINADA thanks its applicants for their trust and call upon its clients to trust their services because (as stated in the flyer) “with COMINADA it’s sure”, that is, the visa is guaranteed. When I asked the receptionists how many people have gone to Canada through their agency, she replied: “many, so many. We are not one of those people who take your money and then you don’t go. This is an agency, an office, and we have branches in other cities in Cameroon. Just ask around and people will testify about us...”

‘Falling bush’ through a formal migration agency

I use the case of Emelda as an example of people travelling through formal migration agencies like COMINADA. The agency Emelda used no longer exists. Like COMINADA, it was specialised to ‘help’ Cameroonian students who wanted to study in Switzerland.

Emelda lived in Switzerland for a total of five years before returning to Cameroon, then back to Switzerland, and then later travelled abroad to the US. Her mum worked at the divisional delegation of transport while her dad worked as a police officer. After her master degree, Emelda got a small job in a local NGO that paid her 50,000FCFA. As she explained to me, there were months where she did not receive any salary. Even the 50.000FCFA wasn’t enough to cover for basic expenses living in Yaoundé so there were months that her parents had to send her money. While working with this NGO, she was also searching for opportunities to travel abroad. In addition to the fact that she couldn’t get a well-paying job in Cameroon, her motivation to travel abroad was further reinforced from the people around her—her neighbour’s frequent remarks about his children abroad as well as her uncle’s children who were also abroad. Seeing all these, she, together with her family (parents and siblings) were eager for her to leave. Emelda explained that:

We have one of our neighbors whose children are abroad. There is also one of my uncles who sold almost everything he had as property, his houses, lands, cars and the only thing which he was left with was the little apartment in which he was staying. He has five children, four girls and one boy. And he sent all of them abroad. And today he has a child in the UK, US, Canada, Germany so he travels all the time to visit his children. Imagine that kind of pride and prestige. So of course when other people see that, they will not even give a thought of having their own child stay to do business in Cameroon. Bushfalling is about pride and status. Just the fact that Mr. A or B has a child abroad, that alone has already given him a different status than his comrades. People in the neighbourhood will be saying that “you see that man who is passing there like that, his son or daughter is in bush”. And that mother or father will be respected. This is why sometimes parents will bear the risk to sell all what they have to send their child or children abroad. Who doesn’t want that his/her child should go abroad, or to have a bushfaller in their family? Everyone wants. It is also about the parent’s name. So sometimes migration is more about the parent’s status than the children themselves. E.g. take the case of my sister. My parents will prefer to borrow money and sell assets just so that she can go abroad. It is better for children to be idle abroad than to be idle around their parents. When children are abroad, parents are hopeful that it will get better, that they can rely on their children afterwards. That is why my parents are doing all what they can so that my sister can go although it is financially stressful now for my family because my parents are retired...

So when my mum thinks of this my uncle and our neighbour, she was always saying “see Pa Zachariah, all his children are abroad and they are doing fine”. This is what motivated my mother. In addition, I was chosen because I am the most intelligent in the family.

Emelda travelled as a student in a private University in Switzerland. Her parents saw an advertisement on TV for a private university in Switzerland in which Swiss representatives from this university travelled to Cameroon and carried out massive campaigns, encouraging students to apply. Before they left, they hired local representatives and opened offices in the cities of Douala and

Yaoundé. These offices served as migration agencies for students aspiring to study in Switzerland. One evening after the 7pm news, Emelda's mum saw commercials advertising the availability of "study-in-Switzerland opportunities through established and 'trusted' agencies". During the TV commercials, Cameroonian parents whose children were enrolled in the University gave life testimonies to proof that it was not fake, it was real. Students had actually gone to Switzerland through this 'line'.

Seeing this, Emelda's mum informed her of this opportunity. Emelda went to the office in Douala to get further information and through friends of friends, she met someone who knew someone who had travelled to Switzerland for studies through this agency. When Emelda had found out all what was needed as admission requirements, she explained to her parents. According to the rules, the payment of fees was a guarantee for the visa. Once the admission documents were sent and most importantly the fees paid, the local representatives from Cameroon worked with the authorities in Switzerland who went ahead to apply for the visa for the applicants. Many Cameroonians, in particular Francophone Cameroonians got admission into this university. When Emelda got the information from the university office in Douala, she later went a second time with her mum so that her mum could also hear for herself what was required. Interested students paid the sum of 25 million FCFA (about 50 thousand Swiss Francs) for the school fees and accommodation for the first year. To raise this money, Emelda's mum sold her car, her parents sold the house they had given out for rent (it was a one-storey building house) in Douala, including another house they had in Bafoussam. At the time Emelda was leaving Cameroon, she left with a group of 12 students all from Cameroon enrolled at the same university.

Emelda initially wanted to register for ENAM (Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature) concours while at the same time searching for opportunities abroad. So when this opportunity came, Emelda's mum decided that this will be a good idea instead of ENAM. When asked why her parents sold almost all their property to send her abroad, Emelda had this to say: "Christy you and I know that in Cameroon, parents can sell all what they got to raise even up

to 50 million for a bushfalling project but they can't do the same thing to raise even two million for you to do business in Cameroon”.

Emelda stayed in Switzerland for four years where she studied and worked and later returned to Cameroon due to failure to get another job and lack of papers. Two years later, she was called up by the organisation she had worked for. During this second stay in Switzerland, she stayed for almost a year and just before the end of her job, she applied for a US visa. She then went back to Cameroon before travelling further afield to the US in search for opportunities. In the US, she entered into a paper marriage before her visa expired. With this marriage, she would get her US citizenship between 3-5 years.

Just as migrants who travel through informal brokers, Emelda explained to me that she faced some challenges when she arrived. She noted that “when you go to their office in Cameroon, they will tell you this and that. In a way that seems like everything is perfect. They will tell you we have already sort out everything for you, so you don't need to worry... It is when you have arrived that you will realise that some of things they said were just fake promises” for instance it was said that she was travelling to study an MBA but this was not the case when she arrived.

This narrative exemplifies the trajectory of a migrant who travelled through a formal broker. Unlike informal brokers, the case of Emelda shows that some formal brokers have a direct relation to the, and with the state (the country of destination). For example when migration agencies work in partnership with embassies to give visas to aspiring migrants travelling for studies. Usually, in such processes, it is evident that the money these agencies received from these migrants whether as school fees, visas fees, and rents, tend to stimulate the economy of the destination country in one way or the other. Beine et al, (2013: 5) study confirms that foreign students provide a source of income for many universities and migrants also stimulate the economies of many developed countries. For instance Emelda and the other 12 Cameroonians paid the sum of 50,000 CHF each for their studies in Switzerland. The migration agencies also have to pay visa application fees to the embassy for each of their client.

Alpes, (2013d: 145, 150-153) study confirms that, the state and migration brokers manage and regulate migration from different perspectives, for example consular offices charge visa fees which are not reimbursed even when the visa is denied. Consulate officers also receive money in exchange for translating and interpreting application files. She shows in her study that visa fees paid to consular services for the delivery of visas could be understood to be the same money which aspiring migrants pay to brokers to enable them get the visas to travel. “Although money given to consulate officers is referred to as fees, visas nevertheless have an official revenue-generating function within consulate services. At the US consulate, most of the salaries of consulate staff come from visa fees”. She also observed at the French consulate in Yaoundé that visa fees were also a revenue generating scheme (Alpes, 2013d: 56-57). Research has also shown that the money paid to US embassies and consulates for processing the files of America DV lottery winners constitute a substantial amount to the US State revenue (Piot, 2014). Yet within the policy domain, migration brokers are framed in terms of crime and profit maximization and state actors in terms of the law and transparency.

Challenges faced by migration brokers in Cameroon

One of the major challenges faced by migration brokers in Cameroon is that ‘lines’ might get blocked. For example an informal broker might have been sending clients to e.g. Belgium by means of a transit visa and succeed. But when he applied for a second set, the visas are denied. This usually happens when for example an embassy changes its staff, since staff that work at the consular section of most developed countries usually have a mandate period of 3 years¹⁷⁵. The incumbent consular official might decline applications for transit visas and this would mean the end of a broker’s ‘line’. In such cases,

¹⁷⁵ With the US embassy for example, the mandate period for consular officers is between 2-3 years and then they are relocated to another country (<http://careers.state.gov/learn/who-we-are> , accessed 28.02.2016). Piot, (2014) asserts that consular staff are being rotated so as to prevent them from becoming too used to the countries for which they are on duty (they might go “native”). If a consular staff becomes too acquainted to his/her country of duty, the assumption is that his/her views of migration might change in favour of the applicants.

and if the client had already paid the broker, the broker will negotiate to send the client to another country. For example a friend of mine was supposed to travel to Belgium but the 'line' didn't go through. His broker explained that his 'contact person' at the Belgian embassy in Cameroon has been relocated to another country. As a solution, the broker negotiated and sent him to Cyprus. One might also say that this is not only a problem of change of staff. It is the fact that brokers are constantly trying to find loopholes, and that recipient countries are constantly trying to close these loopholes. A situation synonymous to money forgery.

Also, some of the brokers have never travelled to the countries for which they send off migrants. Thus they might not be very informed with the changing rules of immigration policies of migrant receiving states which are becoming more stringent.

Some clients pay the initial instalment demanded by the broker and when the visa is out, they are incapable to complete the balance in time. Sometimes before families finally mobilized the money, the visa is close to its expiring date. On one occasion a client was refused entry to Switzerland because his visa was three days to expiration. According to the Swiss immigration police, the migrant didn't provide concrete evidence to show that he was to return to Cameroon within three days. Upon his deportation, this client was claiming that his broker should reimburse a quarter of the money paid since he has been deported. A situation which led to a serious conflict between the broker and the client's family. In the end, the broker 'dashed' the client 100 thousand FCFA just as compensation from the 3 million FCFA that the client paid and promised to help in case any new 'line' showed up.

By contrast, there are also instances where clients have paid money to a broker and the visa was not delivered. Given that not all brokers can actually deliver the services they claim they can, aspiring migrants sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between 'feymen'¹⁷⁶ and real brokers. Migration brokers that are 'feymen' do

¹⁷⁶ 'Feymen' are people who tricked others to get money. They generate money through swindling and financial deception (Ndjio 2006a, b). They are also referred to as "419" (Apter, 1999). 419 is a relevant section in the Nigerian Criminal Code that deals with specific forms of fraud. '419' in Cameroon is manifested in various

not deliver services, they merely dupe their clients. Alpes, (2013c: 8-9) affirms that aspiring migrants often fear that their broker might only be pretending to be a 'big man' with connections to make people travel where as his real intention is to dupe clients. Nonetheless, "as long as the relationship between an aspiring migrant and a migration broker continues in one way or the other, aspiring migrants will not talk of duping" (pg.8-9). In a sense, aspiring migrants hope to be in relation with big men since 'big men' often have international connections and they can make their clients to travel.

Also visa refusals for clients can affect the activities even for a well-established formal migration agency. For example one can say that Switzerland ending the issuing of long term study visas to Cameroonian students in 2009 (with the exception for those on scholarship) likely influenced the shut-down of the migration agency that Emelda used to travelled to Switzerland.

From the foregoing, two major issues need to be clearly stated in relation to the challenges faced by brokers: first, there could be change in legislation in the receiving country, and secondly extra-harshness of staff due to new orders.

Commentary notes on migration brokerage in Cameroon and beyond

The above sections have examined how mobility is made possible by migration brokers notably through documentation— passports, bank statements, flight tickets, and most importantly visas. Passports are important because they are the first document required for transnational migration and visas authorise the journey. However, in order to get the visa, applicants are often asked for bank statements to show that they have sufficient income in their bank accounts. Yet in Cameroon, the majority of the population do not have bank accounts, especially people from the rural areas. In these contexts, money is usually saved in tontines known as 'njangi' groups (which are rotating credit associations). This informal strategy of saving money means that money transactions operate out of the banking

illicit practices such as duping and money laundry. Those involve in this 'game' are mostly youngster (both girls and boys).

system¹⁷⁷. Hence when these documents are demanded, aspiring migrants rely on brokers to deliver them. For instance when a friend of mine got admission for her university studies in Sweden, she paid a broker the sum of 500 thousand francs CFA in order to get a bank statement to show that her parents had the required amount of money to sponsor her in Sweden. Although she had applied for the admission on her own, she nonetheless solicited the service of a broker in order to get her bank statement which allowed her to have the visa to travel.

Thus, from the perspective of aspiring migrants and their families, their concern is whether the broker can make their son/daughter to travel. In doing so, they also assess whether the money charged for a 'line' is reasonable or not. That is why families would pay between 4-6 million for a Canadian 'line' but would not pay the same amount for a Dubai or a China 'line'. Therefore an important aspect here is the geographical location of the destination country, whether it is in central Europe, North America, or Asia.

Given that investing in migration is a way of ensuring familial economic stability, 'genuine' migration brokers are regarded as competent people who can make migration accessible. They are accepted and highly admired as 'big men'; they remain credible (at least for migrants and families who have benefitted from brokers

¹⁷⁷ Even my dad who worked for the CDC (Cameroon Development Corporation) a state-owned parastatal doesn't have a bank account. The CDC employs about 70 percent of the labour force in Cameroon. The CDC labourers received their salaries in cash on 'pay-day' (salary day) and not through any bank account. This started from the colonial days when the CDC was controlled by the British. The practice still goes on even today. The CDC also has different credit unions to which some workers belong. As a registered member of a credit union, you sign up for a certain amount to be deducted from your salary and the rest is paid to you in cash. In return, members of this credit union are issued a credit union booklet or card (not a bank card) and they can borrow money when they are in need. In cases where bank statements are required, applicants have to 'buy' such documents. For example when I was applying for my PhD scholarship at the Graduate Institute, one of the requirements was that applicants need to attached proof of parents income, this was in order to determine if an applicant was actually a needy student worthy for scholarship consideration. Fearing that my application would be rejected as incomplete, I sent an email to the persons in charge to explain how and why my parents don't have any bank account hence I didn't have any document to show proof of their income.

‘help’) and hence their services are much needed. Some of my cousins and informants of mine could only make it to Europe thanks to the services of migration brokers. As one migration broker puts it, “we are just trying to help people. To help these young Cameroonians to better their lives and that of their families... Migration is good, are you not seeing all these buildings here and there that are being built by bushfallers...?”

This means that for potential migrants and their families, being channelled to another country (no matter the means) is not a criminal act. It is rather a meaningful undertaking chosen by those who wish to make a future through migration but cannot possess the legal entitlements ‘unassisted’ by a third party. Therefore within migration brokerage in Cameroon, the concern is whether the migrant travel successfully and not how s/he travels. In a sense, this means that as long as migrants successfully travel (and/or find residence within the recipient country) and the costs incurred for such journeys are acceptable, no one really cares how the broker delivers the services. What matters is the end result.

Divine brokerage or praying for visas? “One needs the intervention of God to get a visa”

As shown above, it is evident that brokers can be powerful to help an aspiring migrant get a visa due to their connections. Yet, some Pentecostal Christians believe that despite this, one still needs the intervention of God. In Cameroon, one of my sister’s friends, a ‘born-again’¹⁷⁸ Christian told me that “it is God who helps the brokers¹⁷⁹ to get visas for people. Without God, nothing can be

¹⁷⁸ To be ‘born-again’ means that a person changes from his/her old ways of behaving. This includes putting an end to practices such as fornication, lies telling, and ancestral belief, to name a few. When one is ‘born-again’ s/he becomes a new creature in Christ. These Christians become re-baptised into their new Pentecostal churches.

¹⁷⁹ She didn’t use the word brokers, given that the word does not exist even within the brokerage business in Cameroon. As echoed before, brokers are called ‘those-who-help-people-to fall-bush’. Because we were speaking in pidgin, the phrase she used for brokers were “these boys dem way them di make doki for fall bush” (meaning these boys who make documents for falling bush).

possible”, she noted. Meyer, (2003, 2004) studies show that within the last two decades, Pentecostalism has become the new opium of the masses in Sub-Sahara Africa. In the case of Cameroon, the founders of these churches get trained in Nigeria either as pastors, apostles, or prophets. Upon return, they establish their own churches.

Over the years, in the course of my interaction with Cameroonian migrants, the issue of religion and various forms of spirituality often come up when migrants explain their migratory and remittance trajectories. This is especially the case for ‘born-again’ Christians. Some people mentioned that to be granted a visa sometimes is a matter of luck and therefore it takes the will of God for this to become a reality. In Cameroon (and other Sub Saharan African countries) Pentecostal churches (and lately, including some non-Pentecostal churches) often organize prayer camps purposely to pray for those who are sick, or for those who want to get married, or those who have been bewitched, or those applying for visas to travel abroad.

These prayer camps, call crusades usually last for days or weeks. In one of these crusades that were organized in Buea, in the South West region between March-April 2007, people were asked to bring their problems to God. The amount of money paid depended on the gravity of the problem. The breaking of curses was comparatively more expensive than healing people from their sicknesses. This is because, it is believed that when one is cursed, it affects all aspects of his or her life—employment, marriage, child birth, including even the ability to travel abroad. The proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Cameroon has further reinforced the belief in God as the main intervener in the acquisition of a visa. For example, a friend of mine had paid a broker to help him get an urgent passport. The broker had promised to deliver it within 3 working days but he couldn’t meet up with the deadline. My friend told me he reported the matter to his pastor and they prayed over it. After six working days, he finally got his passport. Although the broker explained to my friend that the delay was caused by the fact that the person who was in charge was absent from office, my friend explained to me that there were demonic spirits that wanted to ‘tie his progress’. He said that God

had revealed this to his pastor in a dream. So when they prayed, God intervened and the demons were conquered. My friend later explained to me that just as we need God in everything we do, we also need divine intervention for a migration project to succeed¹⁸⁰. He noted that: “Chris, let me tell you. You can still have all your documents and meet all the requirements to get a visa, yet they can still deny you the visa¹⁸¹. You need God to intervene. One needs divine intervention to get a visa. You see, even all these boys who help people to fall bush, it is God who is helping them. It is not by their might, but by the will of God. God is using them to help those who want to fall bush; I mean those who believe in Him...”

In another situation, I visited a friend in Buea during fieldwork in Cameroon and as we sat to watched one of the local Gospel TV channels after lunch, a church member from one of the ‘born-again’ churches gave his testimony as described below:

The pastor is about to start preaching, a few verses of the bible have been read. The pastor opened up the discussion by calling for any of the church members who has any testimony to come and testify. There were many people who went up to the podium. Some testified about being healed from various illnesses, some about marital problems. One woman said there was a cat that always cried behind her house every day at midnight, but she prayed and casted the demon out. Many Christians did give their testimonies. What interested me the most was the testimony of one young gentleman who might have been in his late thirties. He was dressed in a dark-green costume, a white shirt and black tie, and was wearing a black pair of shoes. He also had a good haircut. He has just obtained a US visa after three refusals within the

¹⁸⁰ I attended a church service in Buea in February 2015 and the pastor in his opening remarks told his congregants to bring whatever problems they have to God. He said: “whether it is any problem related to sickness, marriage, curses, witches, or visa refusals, or whatever kind of problem you can think of, please bring it to the lord in prayers”. Most of the congregants in this church were youngsters, university students, and graduates.

¹⁸¹ Alpes, (2013d) study confirms this assertion. She noted that consular officials sometimes work on their psychological intuition and based on the papers presented to them, they can deny or grant the visa even when the applicant have presented all the required documents.

last six years that he has been applying. “This time, my God has done it big”, he began. Then he continued that: “I didn’t just get the visa, I actually won the DV. My God told the devil, enough! After three failed attempts to get the US visa for studies, I have finally gotten it. So my brethren, when God says it is your turn, it will be your turn. And when God says not now, listen to the Holy Ghost... There is power in the lord, amen, (and the congregation responded), amen. The devil thought he can bring me down, but my God is powerful. We serve a living God. So today my brethren, I am overwhelmed with joy. Praise the lord, (and the congregation replied), alleluia. When I was playing the DV, I prayed and told God, let His will be done. And somehow I felt that this was going to be my year that I will finally make it to the US. So my brothers and sisters, whatever you do, trust in the Lord. He has done it for me, tomorrow it can be your turn”. He handed the microphone to the pastor and took his seat.

As the testimonies went on, my friend who is also a ‘born-again’ Christian confirmed that there is power in the lord and there is nothing God cannot do. She explained to me how a member of their church got her UK visa the very first time she applied¹⁸²; a broker ‘helped’ her. She further said, she knows people who she thinks are more qualified than her friend, but because they are not living in the spirit¹⁸³, they have applied for visas several times but did not succeed. We ended up having a 15-20 minutes conversation in which my friend explained to me the importance of being ‘born-again’ (she used to be Catholic which I still am) and advised me to do so because the judgment day is coming soon. On this judgement day, everyone will give an account of the life s/he lived on earth and non-repentant sinners will be condemn to hell, she added.

I know three Cameroonian Pentecostal Christians, two in Sweden and one in Belgium who fasted and prayed when they applied for their permanent residences. They told me they did the same thing when they applied for their visa to travel. The two in Sweden got

¹⁸² I was not really having an interview with my friend. We were just discussing and the topic of bushfalling came in after the testimony we watched on the gospel TV channel.

¹⁸³ Not living in the spirit means they are not ‘born-again’.

theirs but the one in Belgium didn't. His application was rejected because he hadn't yet met all the requirements. Van Dijk, (1997, 2002) has shown the important role of religion in Ghanaian transnational migration. Aspiring migrants and their families attend prayer camps to pray with pastors who are known to have special powers to solve paper work problems related to migration. Van Dijk (1997, 2002) maintains that, amongst Pentecostal Christians in Ghana, it is believed that through prayers, an aspiring migrant can be granted the visa to travel. Once the migrant arrives the country of destination, the corresponding pastor and his/her members in the host country provide help to this newly arrived with issues relating to marriage, emotional and financial support relating to funerals, and paper work. Once the migrant has arrived, the family back home continues to pray for the success of the migrant abroad. (1997: 143-151). Van Dijk, (1997, 2002) concludes that the time and money invested by family members back home in these prayer camps are significant and could not be overlooked for it can also be considered as some of the ways that families engaged in migration—praying for the aspiring migrant to get the visa and for his/her success abroad once departed. Piot, (2010: 91-92) also describes similar dynamics in Togo in which Pentecostal pastors organized prayer sessions to pray for visa applicants by binding any evil spirit and other 'forces of darkness' that might prevent the issuance of a visa.

I attended a Pentecostal church service in April 2013 in Switzerland upon the invitation of a friend/informant. In his prayer, the pastor called on all the other church members to join him in praying for one of their church members (Mathew) so that his wife could be granted a visa to join him. The pastor assured Christians that nothing can be above God and with their prayers, the Swiss authorities would not refuse Mathew's wife the visa. During the church service, Mathew was called up to the altar and the pastor laid his hands on his head and prayed for him, while the other members prayed from their seats. The pastor also prayed that God should provide Mathew with a better job so that he can be able to take care of his family.

It is important to mention here that in these contexts, church serve both as a place of religious worship and a space for social

networks and support—a social home. As an informant noted, “...God has the power to make you get the visa. You only need to put your trust in Him”.

In sum, in this chapter, we were made to understand that getting a visa for many migrants require various forms of ‘help’ from brokers, family, and religious ties. In addition, migrants’ different migratory trajectories have implication for the timing of their initial remittances flow, the frequency, the amount, and decisions in choosing who receives the remittances that are sent. For example the remittance pattern of a migrant whose family borrowed money and sold property for him/her to travel would be different from a migrant like Matilda whose journey was sponsored by her eldest sisters who were already abroad. In the former case, the migrant feels an urgency to remit as soon as possible in order to repay the money that was borrowed while the latter migrant does not faces the same problem.

I close this chapter on how Cameroonians migrate with the next section that focuses on understanding societal perception of ‘failed’ migration (returned migration) and deportation.

“L’Europe l’a dépassé”: returned migration and the social stigma of deportation

Once in the recipient country, migrants have to succeed by any means possible. Given that migration is an investment made by families, they are expected to be rewarded through the success of their migrant. Families do not appreciate migrants returning home for good, no matter how difficult it might be for the migrant. While it might be understandable that after so many years of trying to succeed to no avail, an undocumented migrant might decides to return home, such moves are not welcome by families in Cameroon. Deportation is shameful; when migrants are deported, they will lie about their status, and sometimes they might relocate to other towns and cities in Cameroon to avoid the stigma of being a deportee while at the same time trying to migrate to another country. When one of my neighbors was deported from the Netherlands, he lied that he was travelling to Dubai for business and he was duped by ‘feymen’ (money swindlers). I got to know the truth 3 years later from a friend

(although I had suspected that it was the case). I was in Sweden while talking with a friend on Skype, it was during our discussion that I learnt that my neighbour was deported. My friend who was with my neighbour in the Netherlands said: “I am only telling you now because you are a faller, you know that people don’t say things like this... but the truth is that Olie was sent back, but he is now in China”.

It is expected that by end of January of each year, all bushfallers should be back to their countries of residency. Any bushfaller still hanging around after the end of January is suspected to have been deported. By mid-February when I was home for fieldwork, people in my neighbourhood started suspecting that I had been deported. “What are you still doing here?”, “will you go back?” were the questions I was often asked. Deportation brings shame to both the migrant and his/her family. To be deported is associated to failure and/or laziness. It is like a hunter going to the bush to hunt; as s/he leaves, the family is hoping for nothing but the best. Unfortunately, the hunter returns home empty handed without anything to feed the anxiously waiting family. The family considers this as laziness or failure because the hunter wasn’t proactive enough to go further afield while on his/her adventure. This explains why even if it is the case, deportees don’t say the truth. They just lie about their situation and try to explore different bushfalling ‘lines’.

Be it voluntary return or through deportation, Alpes, (2011) notes that migrants who do not make it in Europe are considered lazy. Deported or voluntary returned migration means the end of remittances flow, hence the reason why such returns are discouraged, stigmatized, and despised¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ See Blondel et al, (2015: 9-10) on the Cameroon legal framework that punishes those Cameroonian migrants who were denied entry at the airport of their destination country or undocumented Cameroonian migrants who were caught and deported. In such cases, fines include imprisonment from 2 months to 2 years and a fine from 500 thousand to 2 million FCFA. In such cases, families have to mobilise money to free their returnee from the airport instead of receiving remittances (Alpes, 2015: 744). For example after living in Switzerland for close to 7 years undocumented, my cousin Lumsi, on her way to Cameroon was detained in police custody at the airport in Zurich for two days. She was detained for travelling with an expired Cameroonian passport (although she had a *laisser-passer*

After failure to get another job that could allow her to stay in Switzerland, Emelda decided to return home; an action which was disappointing to her family. She was insulted in her neighbourhood and people were saying that “l’Europe l’a dépassée” (meaning “Europe is stronger than she is”). She explained that:

At the end of my studies and job, I preferred to go back to Cameroon than to stay here undocumented, but my family didn’t like the idea when I told them I will be coming back. They were afraid because that would mean the end of remittances. I mean not the end but the amount of money I can send at once when I am here in Switzerland is not the same as the amount of money I can give to someone when I am in Cameroon. So you see, that was their fears. In addition, they were also afraid that if I come, maybe I will not go back. They think I would have been deported. These are some of the things that make people back home to be scared when they hear you are coming. When you say you are coming home, it is often common place to hear people ask you: so are you coming to visit or? Will you go back? But there was nothing I could do, I had to leave because my permit had just expired. So I went home and I had some savings, lots of money that I saved from my UN job. It was about 15 million francs CFA (about 30 thousand CHF). I shared it with my siblings in addition to what I had been sending; each of them had a million francs CFA each. I also gave some money to my cousins and other extended family and also did carry out some family projects. I also bought a car for my dad.

I then used the rest of the money that was left to start up a small business, it was a travel agency where I sold flight tickets. There

that was issued by the Cameroon embassy in Bern) and for having stayed undocumented. Upon arrival at the airport in Yaoundé, her husband’s friend who is a top official at the airport ‘helped’ her out to avoid any potential imprisonment. When a returnee arrives through a normal passenger plane, s/he doesn’t faces such potential imprisonment, but when arriving through special planes accompanied by police from the destination country, the returnee has to bribe agents at the airport or s/he would be send to prison, notably New Bell prison in Douala. Some of my informants who stayed undocumented and returned to Cameroon didn’t face such risks of imprisonment because they were not caught and they travelled with a regular passengers’ plane.

wasn't much profit coming out from the business, but it was good because it kept me going while I was looking for jobs and other opportunities in Cameroon and abroad. Even though my siblings were not happy with my decision, following what I did and does for the family from the time spent in Switzerland, my parents considered that I was successful¹⁸⁵ because I could raise more money than any other person in the family when there was a need.

You see, parents are excited to have their children abroad. Sometimes when these children are not doing well abroad, parents lie about it when they talk with their friends. For example one of my mum's friend has a son who has been abroad for more than ten years and has since then not been able to visit back home because he didn't have papers. First he was in Russia and now he is in Germany married to a German wife. He is called Stanley. So when I went home in 2012 at the end of my studies and job, there was news circulating in the neighbourhood that I have been deported. One day Stanley's mum came to visit my mum. As they started chatting, she said: "you should have told me that Emelda didn't have papers when she was there I would have asked Stanley to show her how to get papers". My mum responded that I was the one who decided to return (but I don't think the neighbour believed my mum). You know the belief is that once you come to Cameroon and stay for more than a month, you have been deported. People insulted me in the neighbourhood. One of our neighbour's daughters saw me passing one day and she insulted me saying, "regarde, L'Europe l'a dépassée". Looking at this, you see that I was stereotyped in a negative way, as being lazy, someone who could not make-it in Europe, someone whom Europe is stronger than her. Whereas the case of Stanley who has never been to Cameroon since he left because he didn't have papers is regarded differently. As long as he is still in Europe, whether he has papers or not, he is still considered more successful than me. It is the end result that matters to most people...

¹⁸⁵ While spending a weekend at Emelda's family home in Cameroon, we were coming back from church and in a discussion, Emelda's mum commented that when one wants to send a child abroad, it is better to send a child who is smart. Smart as used here refers to many things: savvy or intelligent, hardworking, thinking about one's family, to cite a few.

So when I went back home, although my siblings were not happy, my parents were ok because they have travelled abroad and so they understand the struggles of Europe. But I knew that somehow, one day I will leave again, but this time, through my own money, not that of my parents because now there is no money. My siblings were like, “you have come back? So how will you do”? But my parents were fine with my decision to come back. One of my sisters said: “this one that Emelda has come back, we are finish”¹⁸⁶. And another cousin asked: “what are you coming back to do”? The main reason why my siblings and cousins didn’t want me to go back is because when I was here in Switzerland and when they called me for a problem I can easily send 100, 000 FCFA but in Cameroon I will not have that same 100, 000 francs CFA to give. I will give you 10.000 and that is not good for the recipient. But still I cannot blame them because that is what they see. They see on TV how people are driving in big cars so they think everything here is fine. They don’t understand that people are also suffering here, working hard to send them money.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that, the lack of legal residence and entry refusal that can lead to deportation is interpreted by families in Cameroon in terms of laziness, not being smart, or hardworking. For instance if migrant A can go and make it, there is no reason migrant B should not make it. Similarly, if migrant A succeeded to enter his/her destination country even with a three-day visa, there is no reason why migrant B should be denied entry. When this happens, it is considered as his/her fault, s/he wasn’t smart enough. In contrast, migrants relate this to different factors¹⁸⁷. In the next chapter I examined how the fact of having a Mbengis go with high expectations to meet when celebrating vital human events such as marriage, births, and deaths. But before I do so, let me round up with my take on the brokerage business in Cameroon and beyond.

¹⁸⁶ This phrase implies that Emelda’s return means the end of remittances, the end of flows of goods that she used to send. It means one can no longer be in need and call Emelda for money.

¹⁸⁷ On their part migrants relate this to jealousy and witchcraft (see chapter 9). First it is about luck which is different for people because some are not lucky. Secondly, the un-lucky consider that s/he is a victim of jealousy.

Migration brokerage as the ‘illegal’ production of migrant legality

One of the main themes that came out from the above sections on migration brokerage is the debate about the ‘illegal but licit’ work of migration brokers. Kalir, (2012: 27.28) maintains that the ‘illegal but licit’ framework enables us to examine two main migration regulatory authorities. On the one hand we have the state as a formal political authority that regulates migration and on the other hand, we have migration brokers as informal social authorities that also regulate migration. In reference to de Genova, (2002) Kalir (2012: 31-42, 47-50) makes the case that, the fact that brokers work with state authorities notably in the recruitment of cheap labour through migration agencies means that both the state and migration brokers are involved in the legal production of migrant illegality. For me, it is not mainly migration brokerage that is “illegal but licit”. It is above all, the various means the migrant use to migrate. Therefore I would say that migration brokerage is “illegal but licit” only when understood within this broader perspective involving the various strategies used by migrants to migrate as well as by brokers to ‘help’ their clients to travel.

Furthermore, I would say that relations between aspiring migrants and migration brokers cannot be understood through the lens of legal paradigms such as “genuine” documents and “fake” documents. This is because the means to get a document can be illegal but this does not mean that the document is fake. Moreover, the document can be ‘illegal’ (fake) but it describes a real life situation. In other words, it could be said that migration is also about producing a legal subject or a legal subjective order (such as the one that is dominant in the US and Europe) e.g. having a bank account, being legally married (traditional weddings are the most common and considered the most important). So in order to match the legal migration requirements, people are to produce papers to the effect of transforming money into a bank account or traditional weddings into civil ones. I illustrate this with the following vignette:

Solange and Nelson got married traditionally in 2004 and they had 3 children. In 2011, Nelson won the American DV lottery. When he played the lottery, he did fill in the lottery application form and said that he is married and has three children. A few months later when the DV results came out, Nelson found out that he won. He already had his passport and had the minimum level of education required which is GCE Advance level. But the problem here was that although Nelson was truly married, he nonetheless didn't have a marriage certificate since he had not done the civil wedding. In order for Nelson not to have his file rejected, he paid a broker the sum of 200 thousand francs CFA to help him get a marriage certificate that would reflect the number of years he was truly married. The broker met a mayor in one of the municipalities who agreed to do a civil wedding for Nelson and his wife but he was given a 'compensation' of 300 thousand FCFA to backdate the marriage certificate to correspond to the information that Nelson had filled out in his form at the time of the DV lottery application. In fact, this was actually the day Nelson was traditionally married. In this 'illegal' but genuine marriage certificate delivered in June 2011 by the broker (with the participation of the mayor), it was written that Nelson and his wife signed their civil wedding on June 11th 2004 in the XXYZ rural council in the East region of Cameroon. In case of any random check by the embassy, the mayor would testify that Nelson was married in his council in 2004. Therefore, although the information regarding marriage date on the marriage certificate was false and the strategy used to get the certificate could be consider illegal, the fact that Nelson was actually married was not false and the marriage certificate was genuine because it was issued at the civil status registry by the mayor.

It was with this 'illegal but licit' marriage certificate that Nelson, his wife, and three children were able to get their immigrant visa to the USA. Thus following this example, distinction between what is 'legal' and 'illegal' in relation to migration remains very ambiguous. As a matter of fact, Alpes, (2013b: 11) attests that a so call 'fake' document can still 'work'¹⁸⁸ and allow the holder to cross a border point. Therefore activities that are illegal but licit are integral to the

¹⁸⁸ Yet, the fact that the document works doesn't make it unfake.

operationalisation of transnational migration brokerage in Cameroon. Given that Cameroonians want to migrate ‘at all cost’ as Alpes (2011) rightly points out, I would say that migration brokerage has thus become one of the everyday survival strategies in which the legal boundaries of the state are extended and remade, with illegal but licit practices shaping the regulatory functions of the state and its boundaries.

To conclude, I would argue that migration brokerage is not about what is legal and what is not, but about transforming one reality into another one—producing by all means possible a migrant that corresponds to the *modern legal subject*. This is because migration rules oblige the migrant to conform to the production of the legal modern subject (having a bank account with sufficient amount of money, legally married to one wife, having a valid passport with a valid visa, to cite a few). Therefore migrants will do anything to match this modern image (even if that means producing ‘fake’ wedding papers, fake paternity claim on children, fake bank account, fake diplomas) even though Cameroon is far from defining its subjects like Europe and the US. Thus the migration enterprise is how to give the image of a person who is integrated into modernity. What is licit from the Cameroon point of view is to profit from the benefits of globalisation¹⁸⁹ and this has resulted to the illegal but licit practices that would produce ‘illegal’ papers for a licit objective— a situation which I call the *‘illegal’ production of migrant legality*¹⁹⁰. For instance

¹⁸⁹ Ferguson, (2006) describes this as having a full membership in a world society or having full membership in a world in which Africans feel “abjected” (Ferguson, 1999). By so doing, African modernity or development “becomes a process that favours imitation over originality” (Nyamnjoh, 2000: 4).

¹⁹⁰De Genova, (2002) maintains that the status of illegality and undocumented migration are produced and sustained through the parameters of the law, notably the laws of migrant receiving states. For him, ““illegality” are constituted and regimented by the law—directly, explicitly, in a manner that presumes to be more or less definitive...” (pg. 424). He notes that ““illegalizations”—or what I have call the legal production of migrant “illegality”—supply the foundational conditions of possibility for these programs, variously called “legalizations”, “regularisations”, or “amnesty”, that institute an official adjustment of status for the undocumented. Every “illegalization” implies the possibility of its own rectification” (pg.429). Writing from a Foucauldian perspective, de Genova, (2002) asserts that, through

Fleischer (2011) observes that, as a strategy to get German permanent resident status or citizenship, Cameroonians in Germany enter into paper marriages. She added that besides this, another practice which Cameroonians use is to have children with German citizens or those who have a permanent residence permit. In some cases, a person with German citizenship or permanent legal status is being paid to claim paternity for a child which is biologically not his/hers (false paternity). Piot (2010) exemplifies how these false kinship practices take place for Togolese aspiring migrants—DV winners and migrants. A man or woman who wins a DV lottery signs a marriage certificate with XXZ. The DV winner presents this marriage certificate with ‘his wife’ or ‘her husband’ at the embassy and once they get the visa and travel to the US, they divorce, allowing the man or the woman to bring over his/her real spouse. This usually happens when the DV winner is not financially fit to finance the migration project. Freeman, (2011) also demonstrates in his study how kinship is (re)made and faked for Asian migrants from China to South Korea. Faced with closures of mobility, Freeman (2011) writes that the act of “counterfeit kinship” legitimized through false documents entails that these migrants need to rework their familial and kinship ties; and this means leaving behind their real spouses and children and ‘marrying’ new partners as a means to gain access to mobility.

the various laws enacted by the states to distinguish residents into aliens versus citizens as well as into “illegal” and “legal” immigrants, the states can be considered to be complacent in the legal production of illegality and deportability (433-439). He makes the case that migrant receiving states do benefit economically from undocumented migration through the low salaries paid to these migrants despite the long working hours they put in as workers in the various sectors of work (e.g. Gardner et al, 2015: 1 studies confirm that undocumented migrants in the US contributed a total of 11.84 billion US dollars— about 8 percent, to state and local taxes in 2012). To conclude, de Genova, suggested that we re-examine “the fundamental origin of the status “illegal” (and its attendant sociospatial condition of deportability) in the law itself...” (2002: 440). In contrast to de Genova (2002), what I call the ‘illegal’ production of migrant legality depicts the various ways/tactics used by brokers and migrants, to produce ‘illegal/fake/false’ documents that give legal access to migration and/or residency for their clients—migrants (e.g. falsified diplomas, false paternity claims on children, fake bank statements).

Moreover, this ‘illegal’ production of migrant legality that I have invoked here could also be understood in the sense of Ferguson, (2006, 1999) as the means through which Cameroonians (and Africans in general) try to avoid abjection. He notes that:

“For what is most striking in the recent history of much of Africa is not the breakdown of boundaries, but a process in which economic decline and political violence have produced new political and economic exclusions that distance Africa from the rest of the world and destroy the sense of connection with, and membership in, an imagined world community that so many Africans experienced during the early days of independence. The combination of an acute awareness of a privilege “first class” world, together with increasing social and economic disconnection from it, is a contemporary African predicament that I have described elsewhere as “abjection”...Where the anthropologist extends the label “modern” to the impoverished African as a gesture of respect and an acknowledgement of coeval temporality, African urbanites who believe their lives will not be “modern” until they have running water and a good hospital may find the gesture an empty one” (Ferguson, 2006: 166,168).

Paying a bribe to an official and other intermediaries to get an urgent passport would be considered illegal because the Cameroon Penal Code forbids illegal payment to state officials for delivery of goods and services. Yet, the passport itself is not fake and neither the migrant, his/her family, nor the broker actually sees this as a criminal act¹⁹¹. For Bayart et al (1999: 15), this rise in the informalisation of state services is as a result of the blurred lines existing between state practices and ‘help’ to acquaintances. They assert that: “the rise in Africa of activities officially classed as criminal is aided by the existence of moral and political codes of behaviour, especially those of ethnicity, kinship, and even religion, and of cultural

¹⁹¹ It is really not clear where one should draw the line between corrupt practices on the one hand and tactics for using one’s social or political position to ‘help’ kin and non-kin on the other hand (Smith, 2007). The state-citizens relationship becomes a situation where one uses his/her social position to ‘help’ *un parent, ami, ou connaissance* (Olivier de Sardan, 2009: 48-49).

representations...” Blundo and le Meur, (2009: 20-21, 24, 29) described these illegal but licit practices in Africa to be as a result of “bureaucratic itineraries” that give rise to selective application of public service rules and pose problems of accountability and governmentality. In these state of affairs, various forms of brokerage and mediation emerge and contribute in shaping everyday interactions.

This leads me to conclude that in order to grasp what brings about the moral and cultural acceptability of a particular illegal act by brokers within a particular context, we must first understand the socio-cultural and legal processes as well as the economic circumstances that give rise to these practices to be consider illegal, but licit; in other words, socially acceptable. Donnan, (2012: 237-239) examines such practices through what he described as moral disjunctions. Through this framework of moral disjunctions, Donan maintains that “illegality can be differently constituted as licit across a range of contexts and individuals. Like ‘illegality’, moral acceptability of licitness is not a self-evident characteristic or property of particular activities or forms of mobility”. In these disjunctive moralities, right and wrong are not neatly aligned with what is legal and illegal. Therefore I would add that it is important to rather understand how these legal paradigms give shape to contemporary transnational migration. As the study of Bayart et al, (1999: 19) confirms, the emergence and criminalisation of these brokerage practices could be a consequence of the combined effect of economic crisis, neoliberal programs of structural adjustment and the loss of legitimacy of political institutions in Cameroon.

Understanding marriage, birth and death practices in the context of Cameroonian Migration and remittances

Introduction

This chapter examines marriage, birth, and death ceremonies in relation to Cameroonian migration and remittances. Here, I examined how migration is influencing and influences the *values*¹⁹² of individual, familial, and communal actions and interactions that defined these vital familial and community events. With regards to the theme of marriage, I describe the factors put together by migrants when choosing spouses abroad. After investing to send their daughter abroad, families expect her to marry a rich man residing abroad, not someone from Cameroon.¹⁹³ Other issues examined in this chapter include how a bushfaller status affect marriage negotiations in relation to traditional weddings and the ostentatiousness of bushfaller church weddings, birth celebrations (“born-house”), and funerals (“cry-die”).

¹⁹²The term *value* is used here in a sociological sense referring to group conceptions of the relative desirability of things. Values are the opinions, convictions or beliefs that guide human actions within a society. It includes such things as morals, ethics, and social values—defining acceptable and non-acceptable actions (Adler, 1956). Using his thesis on a “grand theory” of society that explains all social behaviour, Parsons (1966) considers values to be the core of culture because values give meaning to what people do, direct their lives, and bind people together. These socio-cultural traits function for the operation of society. See also Habermas, (1984).

¹⁹³ A daughter marrying a man from Cameroon means that she would have to spend financially to bring him over and families do not want that. In fact, it is a practice that is laughed at. It is expected that a man should be the one to spend for a woman, to marry and bring her over and not vice versa.

Marriage

Sometimes families tend to choose wives for their migrant sons and they do this when the potential wife is in Cameroon. This act should be understood in the context that it is the norm for men to take care of their wives. Being in Cameroon, the bushfaller son will be responsible for financially taking care of his wife (and some families dislike this). Because remittances are returns on investment, families want to be in control including in deciding who benefits from their son's remittances in terms of who he chooses as a wife from home (see chapter 8, section 8.7).

Migrant women face different kinds of pressure for spousal choice. They are not supposed to marry someone living in Cameroon. So migrant women tend to choose spouses who are already in bush. They tend to choose men who are already stable financially and/or legally. Some will even prefer to marry white men because it won't affect the migrant's remittance flows. It might even enhance it sometimes.

“Quali” first, love second—we don’t eat love”: Migrants choosing spouses

Quali is Cameroonian Pidgin English slang for papers/residency/passport. It could be said to be a derivative from the word “qualification”, as in qualified to have residency/passport. Female migrants tend to choose spouses that will either give them residency and/or money. But judging from my experience, residency status in Europe surpasses the quest for money in influencing female migrants' decisions to choose spouses¹⁹⁴. Having the legal residence

¹⁹⁴ In Cameroon, love is expressed emotionally but also, and most importantly in material and financial flows. A man who loves a woman has to take care of her. Boyfriends are supposed to provide their girlfriends with money for up-keep. Smith, (2000) confirms a similar pattern in his study on premarital sexuality and modern identity in Nigeria in which love becomes meaningful only if it is nurtured with financial and material flows. This explains why girls will prefer to date ‘sugar daddies’ and not ‘gold-diggers’ (Dinan, 1983). Sugar daddies are usually older, financially well-to-do (sometimes married men) who date young girls, some of whom are same age as their children while gold-diggers are usually young men who do not possess any financial power.

status gives the migrant the opportunity to work and to remit. While some men can be attracted to girls and women who are citizens of a European country or who have a permanent legal resident status, this is not considered a socially accepted practice. Men who got residence through their wives are considered lazy. They are often laughed at and insulted by other migrants in the event of a quarrel. One day in a Cameroonian meeting, two men had a misunderstanding one insulted the other in the following words: “when people are talking, you better keep quiet. A man that has been stripped of his manhood and only seeks refuge behind a woman for her papers...” As it is the norm, men should be the one to give residency to their wives through marriage and not the other way round. And women dating men who are undocumented, and cannot provide them with residency through a civil marriage are often laughed out for dating ‘garri-boys’ (synonymous to gold-diggers, Dinan 1983) as in the case of Derrick and Nuella:

Derrick and Nuella are both Cameroonians who have been dating for almost two years. Nuella is a student while Derrick is an undocumented migrant; he had over-stayed his three months tourist visa to Sweden. So after a while, Derrick called Nuella to call-off their relationship. While explaining this to me in tears, Nuella said: “... he said we have to face reality, I don’t have papers, you are just a student and your student status will soon expire. So we can’t continue, you don’t have and I don’t have, so this is not a meaningful relationship. It is better we separate so that each of us can look for better ways to stabilise our situation...” Derrick left her and got married to a white girl.

Coming back from church one day, a friend of mine pointed at a girl and shared the girl’s story to me. Prisca had been dating Linus for three years and one day they decided to temporarily break up the relationship. Prisca decided that they should both seek means to stabilise their legal situation even if that means marrying other people and divorce later to come back and be together. Linus accepted and started dating one Swiss girl, but as my friend explained, it turned out that Linus ended up really loving his new girlfriend. They later got married and presently have two kids while Prisca is still single and undocumented. “Some girls are so stupid”, my friend commented

while we stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus. Then she continued that: “How can she want something like that to be done to her fellow woman, and now she goes about saying that Linus is wicked, what is the wickedness there?. Intimacy breeds love, and that is normal. So she was really hoping that Linus will be staying with her new girlfriend and no feelings will developed, Prisca is such a fool. And besides, why do something like that, if you want to separate, you separate, and no silly arrangements”, she concluded.

As stressed above, residency is a strong factor behind these different marriage [arrangements] practices amongst Cameroonian migrants. For example, my friend Olivier explained to me that Martha (a Cameroonian female student) had refused to marry him because he too was just a student and only had a temporal residence which would expire at the end of his studies. I know both Martha and Olivier, we all studied together. Two other men wanted to befriend Martha, and although Olivier was in my view a pretty good man, his lack of neither permanent residency nor Swedish passport obliterated the love that he showed to Martha. Instead, Martha started dating another Cameroonian migrant whom many considered inadequate to Martha’s standards (this new man was a secondary school drop-out and often dressed shabbily even when there was a party, but he had Swedish citizenship). There were many gossips circulating around within the Cameroonian community¹⁹⁵ about Martha’s relationship with her new boyfriend until it got into Martha’s ears. Once we were together for dinner at a friend’s place, Martha told me: “I don’t care what people say, they are going around gossiping that I am dating Mr. XY but I don’t care. Nobody paid my flight from Cameroon, nobody brought me here to Europe, I chose whom I want, so I don’t care what they say”. I responded that “I understand what you mean my dear. I think what people are gossiping about is not really that you are dating Mr. XY, they are just comparing XY to Olivier and think that may be Olivier would have been the better guy”. “Na them get my life”? (Are they the ones who

¹⁹⁵ Cole, (2014) asserts that gossip is a common phenomenon amongst migrants and within migrant communities. He describes similar practices of jealousy and gossips amongst Malagasy migrants in France.

own my life) she asked. And another friend sitting near us interrupted: “please you people should live Martha in peace, Martha you did the right thing. In this Europe, we just got to be smart. We don’t eat love, Olivier does not have papers and that is a fact. After his studies what will happen, how will he cope? And Martha will like to stay here; so Martha is just doing what is right to secure her stay. Martha I support you; “*quali*” first, love second, we no di chop love” (meaning we don’t eat love), she concluded, with a very strong voice.

At this point our discussion was taking another turn on the issues of papers, love, marriage, being smart, to name a few with each one making her point. I said “For me, I want a really cool guy whether he is just a student or has papers is not really a big issue for me. But that is not to say that papers are not important, they are. And of course I will want to marry a guy who has the permit to stay but if I find a really nice guy who does not have permanent residency or passport, I won’t mind. It just depends what kind of person he is”. One young man and another girl almost immediately jumped in and said: “You are talking like that because you are on scholarship. If you came the way we came to ‘huzzle’ and study, then you will not talk like that”. “I don’t think it has to do with scholarship”, I responded. But they insisted that it had a lot to do with scholarship since that meant that my parents haven’t taken up a loan or sell a valuable family property to send me abroad. The discussion went on and on until it was dancing time.

In a similar situation in a Cameroonian party in Switzerland, we were sitting on a table of six women some of whom were married and had kids running around. I haven’t met these women before, we had just met at the party of a friend and so they started chatting amongst themselves. One was complaining that her husband was not treating her nicely. And another responded that “all these men who just take women here “for free” tend to take things for granted¹⁹⁶. He was supposed to be treating you as a queen, because you have really

¹⁹⁶ “To take women here for free” as used in this sentence means men who do not show love by way of material and financial flows as it is done in Cameroon. In this case, the woman had migrated to Switzerland on her own, it wasn’t the husband who brought her over. Therefore this means the husband had not invested in her, he was just taking her ‘for free’.

helped him a lot”, another girl noted. She continued that: “come to think of it, you came here on your own, he is not the one who brought you here; it was your family that suffered for you. If he was supposed to go and bring a wife from Cameroon and incur all those expenses, what will he say?” “Some of these men are crazy”, another girl echoed. Then she said “if God has blessed them with wives wherein they don’t spend, they should be grateful and keep quiet”. She added that, “any man who wants to marry my younger sister who will be coming next week will have to reimburse all the costs that I have spent. I will not ask him openly like that, I will just tell my family to add it in the bride price list of payment”. At this point, they all burst into laughter and another noted that, “that is a smart idea and the best thing to do”.

Similarly, my informant Celestine told me he prefers to marry a white girl than a “darky” like him because the white girl will never disturb him for money. He will not have to spend to buy things for the girl nor her family. If he marries a “darky” or Cameroonian, he will have to take care of the girl and her family as a son-in-law. In his own words, he noted that: “I haven’t finished taking care of my own family’s problems, so I am not ready to carry someone else’s burden”¹⁹⁷. Celestine finally married his white girlfriend just before their departure to Cameroon in December 2015.

These narratives denote that, while marriage is considered as a normal rite of passage to adulthood¹⁹⁸, marriage can also be used as a means to stabilise one’s situation abroad, hence obtaining access to financial gain or even as a means to gain access to mobility as we have seen in the examples above. Families are fully aware of the fact that

¹⁹⁷ One of my neighbours in Cameroon once told me that if he ever falls bush, he will marry a white woman, he noted that: “if I ever fall bush, I will just look for a white ‘chap’ (a pidgin slang for wife or girlfriend). They don’t give you headache. When you have a white ‘chap’, you only just need to show her love and that is all. But here in Cameroon, you show love with money and material goods”, he said. Also, one of my friends who is married to a Belgian told me: “I am only concerned with my wife, I don’t have to send money to 20-10 hundred people in the name of in –laws back home. Here, it is just me and my wife. I don’t have to spend money for bride price and all the expenses, Whiteman love fine” (meaning white people’s love is good), he added.

¹⁹⁸ According to Warnier (1993a) a man, (nomatter his age) is considered a child (*mu*) in many Grassfield languages if he is not married.

marriage can be a legitimate means to access to mobility, thus they are capable of exerting control even over great geographical distances regarding who their son or daughter will marry.

It also further reinforces the fact that families are expecting returns on investment carried out in the form of migration. After money has been borrowed and property sold to invest in bushfelling, migrants are obliged to ensure that profits in the form of remittances must flow from such investments. For migrants to work and remit, they need the legal residency which can give them more opportunities for jobs. This utmost desire to remain legal/documented has implication on the type of persons migrants choose as spouses. This came out clearly above when my friends insisted that my desire to marry a man based on his character and not so much on his economic and/or legal status is due to my distinctive migratory trajectory—the fact that I travelled as a student on scholarship. As such (according to my friends), I don't feel the same urgency to look for means to remain documented, work, and remit back home as they do. As a matter of fact, “we don't eat love”, papers are more important thus migrants have to be smart in choosing their spouses if they intend to stay, work, and remit.

For a male Cameroonian migrant for instance, marrying a white woman means no remittances to in-laws. The number of people depending on his remittances is smaller compared to another Cameroonian male migrant who is married to a Cameroonian woman. In addition, such a union gives him the legal status to stay, work, and remit. Similarly, when a Cameroonian woman get married to a white man, this gives her the legal status to stay, work, and remit. She, like her male counterpart in the same situation do not have to remit to her in-laws. Again, the difference between Cameroonian women married to whites and Cameroonian women married to fellow Cameroonian men is that in the latter case, they are expected to remit to their in-laws; if not, they will be branded as wicked wives.

Yet again I must say that this obligatory expectation for married women to remit to their in-laws differs from the realities within conjugal unions in Cameroon where a woman is not obliged to take care of her in-laws (at least, not all the times) in the same way that men are expected to. This is because, according to an informant,

“once one is in bush, one is consider to have become automatically rich”. And this assumption of being rich is intensified for migrants married to whites. For example a friend of mine refused to go home for a visit with her German husband because, in her words: “once people see you with a white man, they think that you are swimming in money. People will think that your family have automatically become ‘ajeborta’¹⁹⁹. Your friends in the neighbourhood will be disturbing you to hook them up with your husband’s friends... If you dash someone 10, 000FCFA, the person would consider that you are stingy, s/he will want more simply because you are with a white man. In short, for now, I am going alone with the baby, I will take my husband home in the coming years, now is not just the right time”. One of my friends in Cameroon was disappointed when I told her that my husband is a Cameroonian. She asked me: “what are you doing with a blacky? I was expecting that you will come home with a white guy. I can’t fall bush and married a blacky. Why should I? No, I can’t” she said.

People back home often tend to link being married to whites, (especially for female migrants) to wealth and thus raising hopes for high remittances flow. Many Francophone Cameroonian female migrants are married to Swiss and French men. For example in a Cameroonian women’s meeting in which I was the only Anglophone, 12 out of the 14 active members were, and some are still married to whites.

One of my meeting members advised me to marry a white. She said “c’est les femmes comme vous que les blancs veulent; belles et intelligentes. Tu fais quoi avec les paysans?”²⁰⁰ She noted. She herself is married to a Swiss. She explained to me that she is having problems conceiving, she still doesn’t have a child after 10 years of marriage but she is very happy because her husband is very understandable. If she was married to a Cameroonian, the family of the man would have exerted pressure on him to divorce her because in the Cameroon context, sterility is automatically considered a woman’s fault. My

¹⁹⁹ ‘Ajeborta is Pidgin English slang for upper class people, people who are rich.

²⁰⁰ Paysan as used in this sentence is not the French word for farmer, but it is a Cameroonian slang for fellow countrymen, fellow comrades.

friend has two jobs here in Switzerland, and her duplex in Yaoundé which I visited is almost completed. When leaving for Cameroon, she requested that I visited the house and took photos and send them to her which I did. She explained to me that all the money she earns in Switzerland goes to her family in Cameroon and the duplex she is building. She also spends some money when she and her husband travel for vacation. According to my friend, by marrying a white, her remittance receivers are limited.

“The bush factor” in bride price payments/negotiations

Background on marriage practices in Cameroon

“In-law, I understand you well”, said Onwuzuligbo. Leave everything to us. You know a man’s debt to his father-in-law can never be fully discharged. When we buy a goat or a cow we pay for it and it becomes our own. But when we marry a wife we must go on paying until we die...” (Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe, pg. 64).

Bride price²⁰¹ payment is a key element in the marriage contract in Cameroon and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Bride price payment or bride wealth is the transfer of money and other items from the groom and his agnates to the bride and her agnates upon the marriage of a couple. There are three types of marriage ceremonies in Cameroon—the traditional marriage, the civil marriage, and the church marriage. Amongst these, the traditional marriage is the most important because it entails bride price payments. Before a civil wedding is celebrated, the civil status registrar (the mayor) needs to confirm from the spouses to be that their families approve of their union. Although article 70 (1) and (2) of the Cameroon 1981 Civil Status Registration Ordinance states that the partial or non-payment of bride price shall have no validity on marriage, yet, under customary law, the non-payment of bride price makes a marriage null and void²⁰². The payment of the bride price

²⁰¹ Throughout this paper, I use bride price and bride wealth interchangeably.

²⁰² Cameroon is a pluri-legal state with the customary law, the civil law in Francophone Cameroon, and the common law in Anglophone Cameroon.

means that the children born from this union belong to the husband's lineage. In contrast, any child or children born in a conjugal relationship where bride price was not paid belongs to the girl's father and his lineage (McCulloch 1954: 45, Farnyu and Vubo 2012: 81).

In their study on bride price and fertility in Africa, Mbaye and Wagner, (2013: 2-4) maintain that bride price, what used to be referred to as "prenuptial gifts" are symbolic transfers representing the commitment of the groom towards his bride and family. Over time, these "prenuptial gifts" became traditionally institutionalised in Africa following the agricultural systems that were practiced. Because cultivation relied solely on family labour, families lost a female labour force through marriage. As a result, the payment of bride price could be associated to be a compensation for such a loss that can never be replaced. This line of thought resonates with Graeber, (2011) thesis in which bride wealth is not a payment as such but an acknowledgement of a debt that can never be substituted.

Bride price payments legitimate marriages. Traditionally speaking, it is considered that they are never paid in one instalment even if the groom and his family bring all the items demanded from them. As a matter of fact, it is considered that the payment of bride price never ends especially in the case where the bride has borne children to the man. In other words, bride price payments are endless because the agnates of the woman want to keep the husband under observation (his duties don't end with the wedding). Simply put, what is sought after here is the fact that it is to be avoided at any time that the husband should consider his wife as his property.

Traditionally, consent to marrying a girl must be obtained from the would-be bride's father or family head. Nowadays, bride's consent is essential although the family's approval remains central (Jindra, 1997: 45). The processes leading to the actual wedding day involves many 'visits' by the groom and his family to the bride's family. The first of such visits is called a "knock-door"²⁰³. This is the day when the groom and his family present themselves and their

Customary laws are applicable in a customary court headed by local chiefs and Fons.

²⁰³ In Francophone Cameroon, it is called "frapper le porte".

intentions to the bride's family. For this visit, they should come with palm wine and kolanuts. A second and third visit may follow²⁰⁴.

To conclude these periods of negotiations, a date is chosen by both families when the groom and his family will come with the bride price payments. Before the marriage date, the groom and his family receive a list containing the items to be brought including the amount of money to be paid. In the case of my ethnic group (Bafut, a patrilineal ethnic group), it is said that the amount paid for a bride should not be more than what was paid for her mum. While some families abide by this tradition, others do not. I couldn't get any academic text that explains the symbolic meaning of this practice but I was told that amongst the Bafut, it is believed that if the bride price paid for a girl is higher than what was paid on her mum, misfortune will affect her in the form of sterility. She would never be able to have a child²⁰⁵. I sensed that this has probably to do with ancestry and dependence. No daughter can overtake her mother otherwise traditional order is disrupted and ancestors would not be happy hence they send misfortune. This same reasoning applies to the case of funerals where one is being obliged to celebrate the funeral of a deceased elder brother or sister before his/her younger brother or sister.

Nonetheless in other ethnic groups, the items demanded for the bride price depends on the educational level and economic status of the girl. For example the bride price demanded for an educated girl or a girl who is gainfully employed would be higher compared to a girl with no such skills, see for instance Vubu, (2005) and Farnyu and Vubu, (2012: 81) in the case of the Wimbums. It is in this same logic that some families claim that bride price payments for their bushfaller daughter should be higher given that they have invested in her.

The items brought and the amount paid during bride price ceremonies differ across ethnic groups. Moreover, the roles of the patrilineal and matrilineal kin differ, depending on whether the bride comes from a matrilineal or patrilineal ethnic group. In the case of

²⁰⁴ The number of visits and the items requested vary for the different ethnic groups in Cameroon.

²⁰⁵ Some of the persons I spoke with simply said "it is tradition and one cannot go against because if they do, tradition will indict them".

patrilineal societies in the Grassfield, the paternal uncles play a key role. They are the ones who determine how much is supposed to be paid and they receive the items brought. Each patriclan or matriclan is headed by a clan head with varying functions according to the particular ethnic group. The lineage head carries out some duties including distributing land to the male members of the lineage. He is also responsible to collect the bride price during marriage of the female lineage members (Jindra, 1997: 22-23). In the case of matrilineal societies, the maternal uncles play a central role; for a broader analysis, see Forde, 1954 and McCulloch 1954: 45.

In these ceremonies, and amongst the Grassfielders, the biological parents of the bride are not directly concerned; the uncles receive the gifts and share within the extended family including the parents of the bride. According to Warnier, (1985: 11-30) some major goods such as salt, palm oil, cowries, textiles, and kola nuts have always been central to Grassfield economic activities. Thus, these goods including camwood are inevitable items for marriage payments. In what follows, I examined how the bushfaller status of a migrant affects bride wealth ceremonies. First I examine the case of Stephen and later my own case. It was interesting to see how bushfallerness influenced these negotiations differently for male and female bushfallers.

Stephen and his ‘wives’²⁰⁶

After staying in Europe for six years, Stephen decided that it was time for him to get married. Once, when we spoke over the phone, he told me, “Chris if one is waiting to have all what it takes here in bush before one gets married, one might end up living as a bachelor for life. Not only a bachelor, but a bachelor with no kids”, he said, and we both burst out into laughter. Stephen and his girlfriend Elisabeth have been communicating from the time he left Cameroon. He had the intention to marry her and bring her over once his financial and legal situation in Switzerland is finalised; that is when

²⁰⁶I wrote ‘wives’ (in single quotation marks) because his first wife was a ‘fictitious’ wife, a woman he married to allow him get his residency to stay in Switzerland. They do not consummate the marriage, it is strictly a business. Anasta is his real wife, the one he intends to form a family with.

he gets his Swiss residence and a permanent full time job. He had applied for the Canadian lottery but didn't get it, so he applied for a second master degree program just so he can stay. But as the program was coming to an end, he decided to try other options before he was kicked out by the Swiss authorities. So he entered into a 'paper marriage' with a Swiss lady, Clementine for 10,000CHF. The agreement was that after the marriage certificate was signed and registered at the migration office, he would pay Clementine the first instalment of 5000CHF and complete the rest (5000CHF) once he had gotten his permanent residence (permit C). Stephen told me he was very lucky to find this girl who could accept to do a 'paper marriage' for such a cheap price. Usually in Switzerland, it is from 15000CHF and above, that is the amount some of his friends have paid. Depending on who is selling and who is buying, the price for a 'paper marriage' can go up to 40,000CHF²⁰⁷.

Through gossips from friends and family back home, Stephen learnt that his girlfriend Elisabeth was cheating on him. He explained that: "Chris, you will not imagine that Elisabeth is cheating on me despite all what I am doing for her; sending her money for up-keep every month. So what will make her cheat?" he asked. I advised Stephen not to pay attention to gossips from back home, "if you love her, then go and marry her because only sending her money can never be enough", I said. When Stephen's paper marriage went through, he finally got his residence permit— permit B (but not his permanent residence) that could allow him to travel to Cameroon. Elisabeth and some members of Stephen's family came to pick him up at the airport. Elisabeth had gained so much weight, Stephen complained. One of Stephen's cousins told Stephen that there is news circulating in the neighbourhood that Elisabeth had an abortion. So when Stephen saw how fat Elisabeth was, he concluded that, what he had heard was true and that led to the end of their relationship. Elisabeth, who is also from the Northwest region of Cameroon, tried to explain to him that all he has heard was not true. There were just friends

²⁰⁷ Fleischer (2011) observed similar practices amongst Cameroonians in Germany, but the price is comparatively cheaper than Switzerland. See also Piot, (2010) for paper marriage practices among DV winners in Togo and Freeman, (2011) in the case of Asian migrants.

being jealous of her. But Stephen had made up his mind and so the relationship ended.

Instead of spending the two months in Cameroon, he stayed for three more months. He needed time to hook up with another girl before his departure back to Switzerland. Through friends and families, he was introduced to some girls but he had to run a series of tests including blood compatibility test, formally known as Hemoglobin S Evaluation (the sickle cell test). For the first two girls that he was introduced to, the results came out positive so he couldn't marry them. Time was running fast, Stephen had only one month left and he urgently needed to hook up with a girl before he left. Through one of his cousins, he finally met Anasta and after running the compatibility test, it turned out that he could settle with her. So he met Anasta's mum and siblings, who were all from the same ethnic group in the Northwest region of Cameroon. At the end of his vacation, he came back to Switzerland, stayed for one year and returned to Cameroon to officially marry his fiancée. He intended to only do the traditional and the church wedding (he can't do the civil wedding since he is already officially married in Switzerland), but it seems that even churches are changing the rules. In the protestant church where Stephen is a member, the pastor said that according to the rules, he couldn't celebrate a marriage without seeing the marriage certificate. Stephen sent one of his brothers who explained to the pastor why he couldn't do a civil wedding in Cameroon. Finally the pastor understood and decided to make an exception.

The first and most important step was the traditional wedding. As is the case in the Grassfields, there were a number of goods that Stephen had to bring plus a sum of money he had to pay. Stephen had instructed Anasta's parents and siblings not to inform her uncles, especially her paternal uncles (who according to tradition are the ones responsible for receiving the bride price payments) that he was coming from abroad, as a way for him to avoid being charged excessively. But it seems that this strategy didn't work out as news had already reach Anasta's uncles that Stephen was a bushfaller. At the marriage ceremony which I attended, there were lots of negotiations. All the items that were originally on the list had been

presented by Stephen and his family²⁰⁸. But one of the uncles complained that the items brought were insufficient and until a complement was paid, Stephen couldn't take Anasta with him as a wife. Stephen got annoyed, and a brother of his tried to calm him down. I intervened as well and told him to be calm and just do what he was asked to do. "The thing is that I had not planned for this other extras and extras", Stephen told me. He added that "I had brought all what they asked and even added more, now they still want more. I don't even know who even told this people that I was coming from bush (abroad), may be that is why they are behaving like this", he complained. "No", a cousin interrupted, "it is not really about abroad, and this issue of traditional wedding is always like this. It is a time to chop-chop and chop (eat-eat and eat) for these villagers so you just have to give them". A friend of Stephen that was standing close to me insisted that even though traditional weddings are always like this, the fact that Stephen was a bushfaller had an effect. In his direct words in pidgin, he said: "but palava bush de for inside this matter. These men dem di make so because them know say this man na faller so e get dough, but them fail for know say na for their pekin e own good" (but the issue of bushfaller is inside this matter. These men are behaving like this because they know that Stephen is a faller meaning he has money, but they fail to understand that it is for their daughter's own benefit).

Two other cousins of Stephen confirmed what the friend just said, and another added that "these men have "long-throat", they just want to eat, give them what they want Stevo and take your madam go", he added. Stephen called one of his brothers who had his wallet, together with Stephen's paternal uncles, they went out and had a small meeting. Later, they gave 30,000FCFA to Anasta's family for more drinks to be bought and an additional 50,000FCFA to be distributed to Anasta's maternal aunts. Still that was not enough. One uncle came up and said Stephen needed to pay the transport of all the aunts and uncles that came for the ceremony. Stephen complied and did all what he was requested to do.

²⁰⁸ I asked Stephen for permission to use his marriage list but he didn't have it. One of his uncles in the village has it.

The next day when I spoke with Stephen, he re-called how they only let him had his wife after paying for many other items that was not in the original list of bride price items that they had given him. “These people just annoyed me last night, they were asking for this and that, and then they will still expect me to be taking care of them as an in-law? I will not do it...” Stephen noted (speaking with some anger in his voice)²⁰⁹. So I told him to calm down and just be happy that at the end it went well, and that was the most important. “They think because I was coming from Europe I will come to change their entire life overnight, nonsense”! He concluded as we hung up the phone. Thus, while it is sometimes the case that, there are disagreements and arguments within bride price payments ceremonies, such contentions can become intensified if the groom is a bushfaller.

Having discussed how being a bushfaller can affect marriage payments/negotiations, I used my own case study to further expand on this theme. As a woman, it was interesting to see how these dynamics were different/gendered, or at least perceived and interpreted differently by my family (both nuclear and extended).

²⁰⁹ In Cameroon, it is often said that the bride price of a woman never ends and it is never paid at once. This symbolically means that after the payment of the ‘official’ bride price demanded by the family of the bride, the men, who have now become husbands are expected to always take care of their wives and her family, — his in-laws. In the event of sickness, or death or any form of celebration, the husbands are expected to contribute. For example if the father or mother of his wife dies, the husband is expected to offer a befitting burial for his father or mother-in-law. This means that he will feed the mourners, buy the burial clothes, the coffin, etc. Stephen was annoyed that they were making him pay so much for the bride price because he knew he was expected to take care of his in-laws, especially his parents-in-law in the long run. This explains why he told me they should not expect anything from him as a son-in-law (but he said so out of anger). He often sends money to his in-laws especially his mother-in-law e.g. in December 2015, he was financially tight-up so he borrowed 150CHF from me to send to his mother-in-law.

“We don’t sell women”: the bushfaller status in marriage payments/negotiations

Weddings, (in this case traditional weddings) and funerals are important family rites/rituals because it is at such events that families come together to validate their shared kinship (Olwig, 2002: 205). Yet, even at such times of solidarity, there are often disagreements amongst members.

Amongst the Bafut, marriage payment is in 5 stages²¹⁰. The groom and his family have to visit the bride and his family on these different stages bringing along what is expected at each stage or can chose to do two, or three trips depending on the arrangements. The first stage is the introduction, (also called the “knock door”). Here, the groom, his friends, and few members of his family come along with five litres of palm wine in a calabash which the bride’s father has to pay for. The amount paid determines whether the father of the girl accepts the union. A very big amount paid means refusal. Each 1000FCFA paid ‘gives birth’ to 10,000FCFA. For example if the father of the bride pays 1000FCFA, it means the groom and his family have to bring 11000FCFA on the return visit for stage two. After the introductory “mimbo” (pidgin word for drinks), the next stage is the “small mimbo”, then “small oil”, then “big oil”, followed by the “marriage soup”, and the final stage is the marriage per se (see appendix 9 for a sample bride price list arranged according to the various stages). The bride’s patrilineal lineage head receives the bride price for all daughters within the lineage. In the case where it is the first daughter marrying from that lineage, the ceremony must take place in the compound of the lineage head in the village. Subsequent marriage celebrations can take place at the residence of the bride’s biological father, but this is only if the bride price for the bride’s mother was paid²¹¹. However, the father of the bride does not receive the bride price. The patrilineal lineage head is the one who receives what is brought.

²¹⁰ In other Grassfield ethnic groups marriage payment is between 3-5 stages.

²¹¹ In my own case, the wedding took place in my father’s compound because I am not the first girl to marry from my family. My elder sister was married and the ceremony took place in the village in the house of the patrilineal lineage head.

It was on a certain Sunday in April 2014; I was back from church and wanted to call my parents to find out how they were doing. I called my mum, and after we finished talking, I informed her that my fiancé and his family will come to see them once I am in Cameroon. The first question she asked me was: “na which kontri”? (Meaning he is from which ethnic group because I had already informed her that he is a Cameroonian). “He is Bamileke”, I replied. “Bamileke”? (She exclaimed). “Your brother married a Bassa, and now you are Bamileke, so you people can’t find men or wives from Bafut”, she asked. Before I could respond, she said: “well, if it is your choice, then no worries. I only want that each of you should be happy with whoever you are married to”.

Then came December 2014 and I was in Cameroon. I had already drawn up the time table for my research because I didn’t want any marriage preparations to affect my research in anyway. A date was fixed when my fiancé and his family will officially come to present themselves—the introduction, (“knock door”). During such occasion, the groom and his family are supposed to present themselves with five litres of palm wine in a calabash. But my in-laws probably didn’t understand that. Being also from the Grassfield region, I had taken-for-granted that they will know exactly how to be traditionally correct. After a prayer was said and a meal served, my in-laws, parents, and a few relatives were called into a room at my parents’ house so that my in-laws could officially explain their presence and intention. But before they do that, they needed to present the five litres of palm wine which they didn’t have. According to custom, no discussion could take place unless they presented the palm-wine²¹². So my in-laws gave money for beer to be bought instead of palm wine because palm wine could not be readily available. Secondly, there was a lot of questioning why my in-laws had only come with members of the nuclear family and no friends or extended family. In a ceremony such as an introduction, friends and

²¹² Warnier, (2009: 179) maintains that palm wine is an important drink amongst the Grassfielders especially the people of the Bamenda plateau. It is used to open up ceremonies/discussions. It is also used by the Fons and other village notables to solve village problems. Amongst the Mankons, the Fon used it during the annual festival to bless his subjects.

members of the extended family are important. One of my cousins later explained to me that according to tradition, a suitor coming to ask a girl's hand in marriage for the first time without the company of his friends and/or extended family means that he is not in good terms with the latter. This therefore puts a question mark on the suitor's character.

After a series of deliberations, a date was officially set up wherein my fiancé and his family will come for the bride price payment which will take place in Bamenda. According to customs, my parents couldn't receive any bride price payments; it has to be the lineage head (who in this case was the successor of my paternal grandfather) and my paternal uncles. But before my in-laws could leave, my dad was supposed to pay for the five litres of palm wine that was presented. As I said before, the amount paid determines whether he accepts further visits from his in-laws. Every 1000FCFA 'gives birth' to 10,000FCFA. Paying the palm wine with a huge sum of money say for example 100,000FCFA means that he is indirectly telling the in-laws 'please go and don't come back'. But in this case, he paid for the drink with the sum of 2000FCFA. In deciding how much to pay for the palm wine (before the arrival of my in-laws), one of my cousins had suggested that my dad pay the drinks with 5000FCFA but he refused saying that he was not on a market, and besides "money for woman e head no di ever finish and them no di payam one time" (meaning bride price payment for a woman never ends and you can't pay it all at once). A disapproval which really quite disappointed my cousin who thought that based on what I have achieved educationally and the fact that I travelled abroad on my own, the money paid for the drinks needed to match my status. To travelled abroad on my own means that it wasn't my present husband who funded, so he didn't contribute in any way in my migration project. So he had to pay retroactively for that²¹³.

²¹³ In another situation, the mother of a friend of mine convinced her husband's brothers to reduce the items needed for her daughter's bride price payment. She lied that her son-in-law has got so many problems and he had also been sick and couldn't afford to pay so much for the bride price at that time. But in reality, as my friend told me, it was because the husband was in the United States and has promised to take-over his wife after marriage to the US the following year so her mum didn't want him to spend so much since he will still need to spend

My parents travelled to Bamenda to meet my paternal uncle who is the one to produce the list of items that are supposed to be brought by my husband and his family. After the list was set up, there were strict instructions from my uncle that my in-laws should come with their “messenger” and not only members of my husband’s nuclear family which was the case when they came for the knock-door. A “messenger” should not come from a husband’s nuclear family, it must be someone from the extended family—uncle, aunt. A “messenger” is the person that will present the items that will be brought on the day of the traditional wedding. When the list was drawn up, one of my cousins who saw the list told me that it was the same list that was used during the bride price payments of one of my other cousins. He further explained that:

“I am very disappointed; in this family we are just dashing women. This people don’t add anything, as a matter of fact there was one item that was even left out from the list. It was the same thing that was done for sister Esther’s wedding. She has studied abroad, has a PhD and she is working, but you people don’t consider that. Look at me, my fiancée does not even have that kind of education and achievements that you people have and I have been asked to pay quite a lot, even more than they asked from your own husbands. When I see my sisters just being given away quite cheap like that, it really annoys me. Your husbands are very lucky to have you people. Look at you, a whole bushfaller; they say the amount paid is supposed to be what they paid for your mum, and indeed it is the same. But your mum didn’t go to school, she didn’t

money to bring over his wife. Asking for too much might discourage him to marry their daughter and that would mean blocking her daughter’s chances of falling bush. Moreover, the biological parents are not the ones receiving the bride price, it is paid to the paternal uncles who decide how much (discretionary or arbitrarily) can be given to the biological parents of the bride. “So why should we miss an opportunity for our sister and daughter to travel abroad because we want to fully satisfy the greed of uncles”, she said. She noted that “had it been they were both staying in the US, or that my sister was already in the US, that would have been a different story. But for the moment, the important thing is that she will fall bush, and we just have to satisfy those uncle’s in the village by giving what they demand as bride price; but we also have to be smart not to make the groom feel discouraged due to high marriage payment demands”, she concluded.

travel abroad, I mean she was not a bushfaller and her parents had not invested in her...”

I laughed as I listened to him express his frustration and anger and told him “we are an understanding family, we don’t sell women”, I joked. “Understand what? (He shouted, as if my statement just further provoked him), the fact is that we need to start doing things as the other tribes where bride price changes depending on the type of woman. It is not a uniform thing as you people do in this family”, he added. I changed the subject by asking how his fiancée was doing and when they will be coming to Buea to visit me.

A week later, I was in Douala to inform one of my maternal aunts of the occasion and the date that had been chosen. “Will you still be here”? She asked. “Yes”, I responded. “So you will be there on the occasion, I mean on the day of the wedding”? she continued. “Yes, I will be there. I leave in March”. “No! I don’t accept”, she stated, and continued that:

“I have to call mama to tell her that they should postpone the wedding until you are gone. They should do it in your absence. You remember how last time your wallet got lost mysteriously when you were in Bamenda²¹⁴. Those people in the village, their belly is not good. You can never know their intentions especially as they know you are coming from oversea (abroad). It is on occasions like this that people profit to do terrible things. I will not accept this. Many bushfallers don’t do marriage now like this. They send people to represent them for their

²¹⁴ In 2011 while on a visit to Cameroon, I left my wallet in the living room of my father’s house in Bamenda. I, my sister, and my mum were sitting outside. To the best of knowledge, the main door leading to the outside was locked while we sat in the kitchen behind the house. As we finished eating and discussing, I went in to pick my wallet to go visit an aunt of mine. It was gone. I checked the main door and it was still locked. I called my sister and mum and we looked for it to no avail. I told my mum that may be a passer-by entered through the back door and stole it when my sister went to fetch water. But my mum had a different view. She said they are enemies who came to steal my ‘passbook’ (meaning passport) to deprive me from going back (an opinion which was also shared by one of my aunts, and a neighbour when my mum explained it to them). She asked me if my ‘passbook’ was inside, and I said no. it was my bank card, my student ID, my Cameroonian ID, and 70,000FCFA.

traditional wedding and they only come for their white wedding (church wedding). You know all those rites performed during traditional weddings, people don't like it because not everyone does it with their clean hearts, especially because it is not your biological parents who does it but uncles, some of whom you don't even know", she concluded²¹⁵.

I responded that "Ma Ess had suggested that I didn't go but mum refused and said that it will be important for me to be there so that I can be rubbed with palm oil, and also for me to drink the palm wine from the cup of the lineage head²¹⁶. She said my oil can't be rubbed on someone else"²¹⁷. My aunt continued that: "let mum stop saying like that, so many people do that now. When it comes to marriage nowadays, it is just about understanding, especially when it involves people from abroad. What these people want is to eat, so if you give them what they have asked, they can still do it even without you. For you to be there on that day with those uncles, I am really worried. Or daddy what do you think" (she turned to her husband and asked). "Yes, you are right ma (her husband confirmed). I know many people who only send money and they do it in their absence. One of my friend's sons who is in America did the same. Both he and the wife live in America so they only send money and they did it. I have heard stories where people have come like this and "things" happen to

²¹⁵ My aunt's fear was further reinforced by the fact that one of her neighbours in Douala had explained to her how a girl's hand bag got missing with all her passports and all her documents a day before her return to the US. So she was worried that a similar thing might happen to me if I went to Bamenda especially after meeting certain uncles that I had never met.

²¹⁶ This lineage head (the one who receives the bride price) is my father's step-brother because my grandfather was married to two wives. Age wise, my dad is older than him. But because he has been co-opted into the successor, he is now considered as my dad's father. I asked my father why his step-brother was the one chosen as successor and not him. He responded that it was because he left the village at an early age and came to the coast. And then he said, "there are many things that goes with choosing a successor so I can't judge my father for his decision..."

²¹⁷ In the case where the bride is not present, her oil is rubbed on the person representing her.

them, people's belly is not good. So Atek (short form for Atekhangoh) what your aunt is saying is right," he said.

I came back to Buea feeling worried about what my aunt and her husband had just said. My foster mum had similar fears, but hers concerned mainly my husband. Being a Bamileke, my foster mum was worried because Bamilekes are known for belonging into *famla* (a society in which members of the family are sacrificed to the occult). These are the words in my discussion with her: "did you say your husband is Bamileke"? "Yes mami", I responded. "Mmh" (she murmured), and then she said "I hope he is not one of those Bamileke who belong to that society of theirs. Those people often sacrifice their family members so that they can be prosperous in their business. I heard there was a Bamileke man whose wife died in the course of giving birth after so many miscarriages. People said the husband was responsible for her death. And this is not the only case, there are many cases like that. But I hope you know him very well". "Yes mum", I replied. "And do you know his family very well"? "I don't know all his family but at least I have spoken with them on the phone and have visited his sister who lives in France", I said. "What about his father, what does he do"? "His father passed-on". I said. "What killed him"? She asked. "He was sick", I responded. "When did he die and how old was he"? She continued. "He was about 75 years old or so, and he died four years ago". "And his mother, you said she lives in Yaoundé"? She asked. "Yes mum", I confirmed. "Ok, I am just asking to be sure, those people, I cannot trust them. But if you say you know him and his family very well, then that is fine, she concluded²¹⁸.

A cousin of mine had expressed her own fears when I was travelling to Cameroon in 2011. She warned me not to eat in people's houses, especially the food that people cook and bring to greet me.

²¹⁸ Warnier, (1995: 269) and Feldman-Savelsberg, (1999: 186-187) confirm that the Bamilekes belong to *famla* as a way to become even more prosperous business men (hommes d'affaires). *Famlas* are "witches conjuries under the guise of rotating credit associations (tontines/njangi). Rather than contributing only money, members of *famla* contribute a victim, usually a close relative". The victim appears to die a sudden death but actually work in an invisible world for the *famla's* member. The profit from this invisible labour makes the investments as well as the money of the *famla's* member to flourish.

“When you visit people and they give you food, don’t eat. Tell them that you are watching your weight” she cautioned. I started thinking about all these warnings and cautions. So that night, I called my parents and explained to them what my aunt said but my mum insisted that no wedding will be done in my absence. She said: “you are here and you are going to be present on the day of your wedding. You have to drink the ‘mimbo’ (pidgin word for drinks) from the cup of your grandfather” (meaning my grandfather’s successor), she insisted. “And you will need to be rubbed with the oil. Nothing can happen to you, I am your mother I am the one talking. Nothing can happen to you, I am still alive”, she insisted.

Two days before the wedding, my fiancé visited my parents and one of my paternal uncles (not the lineage head, just one of my dad’s closest brothers) in Bamenda where the wedding would take place. As we sat in the living room of my uncle, he welcomed my fiancé and asked him how long we have known each other. After a series of questions asked and responded in English, my uncle cautioned that “in our family, we don’t accept polygamy (what he actually meant was polygyny)²¹⁹. In addition, I wish that you and my daughter stay in harmony, she is coming to work *with* you and not *for* you”, he noted, then he insisted “to work *with* you and not *for* you. She does not only marry you, but your entire family, your brothers are also her husband. The same as you marry her family as well”. After these pieces of advice from my uncle (to which my parents listened patiently and calmly without offering a word), my fiancé thanked my uncle as we went ahead with preparations for the ceremony which was the next day.

²¹⁹ My eldest brother had said the same thing during the ‘knock-door’ ceremony, he told my mother-in-law “We hear that your son is the successor in your family, but it is important to stress the fact that we don’t accept polygamy (polygyny) in our family. So if that is something he has in mind, let him inform us so that we don’t continue with the marriage”. “People don’t do that these days”, one of my in-laws responded. And my brother responded that: “we know, but it is good to just iron-out things like this from the beginning”. “As for that, have no fear”, my in-law assured them. My family was being cautious of polygyny because it is common place for Bamileke men to marry more than one woman. They can be monogamously married legally but traditionally polygynous.

Then came the day of the wedding itself. Everyone was seated, my paternal uncles and the successor of my grandfather entered into the room where all the items brought by my fiancé's family were stored. Only my paternal uncles had the right to enter this room. A person goes in only when s/he is called. All other persons sat in the living room and outside under canopies. One of my uncles called up the “messenger” of my in-laws for her to present the cash payment that was also part of the items asked. The payment given was insufficient and so was returned back to the “messenger”—e no correct (it is not correct), noted one of my uncles. So my in-laws had to deliberate amongst themselves on how they would increase the amount (although the amount was well spelled-out in the bride price list as indicated on appendix 9). At this time, one of my in-laws grumbled in French that I have told my family that my prospective husband lives abroad so that they should demand more money. My brother's wife who was sitting near-by heard what she said and reported it to my brother who got annoyed and called one of my brother-in-laws to warn them to stop silly complaints and comments. As if this was not enough, one of my other sisters-in-laws called me outside and asked me why I couldn't ask my family to “be understanding” (meaning to just accept whatever they—my in-laws, offer). “At such occasion, I don't have any voice, I can't say anything. Have you seen any woman inside that room, even me, I am not allowed to enter there, I said”. A friend of mine that was standing nearby and taking pictures interrupted: “that room is like a *kwifor*²²⁰ house, I am even scared to go in and take pictures” as she laughed while taking more pictures.

When it was confirmed that all the items on the marriage list had been presented, the lineage head shared the items as tradition demands. Some of the gallons of oil and other items plus money went to my maternal uncles and aunts. The food and drinks were shared

²²⁰ *Kwifor* is the highest secret society amongst the Bafut and many other ethnic groups in the Grassfield. The *Kwifor* masquerade (juju) only comes out during the burial of an elderly male who was a member of this secret society or during the burial of a Fon that had “disappeared/gone missing”. It comes out very late at night and women and men who are not members of the *kwifor* house are not allowed to see it.

to all the guests present. After my paternal uncles and aunts had finished eating, the lineage head took out his horn-cup, poured palm wine inside, took the first sip and gave it to me to drink and for my husband to drink as well. This was to seal the union and to show that the both families have accepted the union. Warnier (1993a) describes the symbolic meaning of drinking from the “cup” of a father, the Fon, or a successor for the Grassfielders. Drinking from the cup of notables is a privilege and a blessing, says Warnier.

One of my other maternal uncles whom I was meeting for the first time kept making lousy noise, demanding that they give him more beer to drink. My mother-in law asked who was this person that was disturbing. One of my maternal aunts immediately got annoyed, stood up and shouted at my mother in-law: “when you come into people’s family, you should keep quiet. You think someone here is a stranger. Stop noise, stop talking. Respect people. You people are coming to marry a well-educated and successful daughter of ours, a PhD holder who is living abroad. What have your son done to us, we have not even charged anything. Who do you take us to be; whom do you think we are...” (She was so loud that she was pulled out by one of my brothers to avoid further conflicts)²²¹.

At this point, my mother in-law started to plead that they should forgive her in case she had said anything bad. She just has asked a question. She went into her bag, took out sweet “alakata pepper” (*Aframomum danielli*), unpeeled it on a plate, and asked me to pass it round. Amongst the Bamilekes, the sweet “alakata pepper” is for peace, it helps in times of conflicts to calm down anger. Then came the time for the lineage head to make a speech. He said: “in this family, we give birth a lot. So Atek as you are leaving this house with two feet, the next time you visit us, you will come with 2+ feet, which means you will come with twins. May God be with you, guide you and protect you and your husband” (applause from the attendees).

²²¹ One of my brothers said to me and my other relatives that, what my aunt did was correct, “she just did the right thing, someone had to correct your mother-in-law”, he said to me. Then he added that she (my mother in-law) and her family were complaining a lot, and aunty Nka’s anger was provoked by the comment made by one of my in-laws that I had asked my family to demand a higher bride price from them.

Then he unwrapped a present which had been bought by my paternal uncles. It was a traditional bag, made of raphia and a wooden stool. After offering me the presents, I was asked to sit on the wooden stool for the blessing of fecundity. The lineage head rubbed my feet with palm oil. One of my paternal aunts rubbed my back (see photos in appendix 11). Camwood (scientifically known as *Baphia nitida*) is a leguminous, hard-wooded tree. A piece of wood from this tree or its grounded bark into powder forms camwood powder which is used in many rituals in the Grassfield. It was, and is still used after being mixed with palm oil to rub on a bride during a traditional wedding. Feldman-Savelsberg, (1999: 90) confirms that the significance of this process is to bless the bride with fertility. As shown in the photos in appendix 11, the palm oil was rubbed on my legs by the paternal uncle and on my back by a paternal aunt. In the old days, the palm oil was poured on the girl but I had requested that the oil should not to be poured on me. In my sister's case, the oil was rubbed all over her body.

After this, the lineage head held up the raphia bag they had offered me and he said: "Atek, in this bag, you will put your books and pens to take to school. The books and the pens are the tools which you will use to work, to work together with your husband to nourish the family that God will bless you with. And this stool, this is where you will sit when you are preparing your husband's food in the kitchen".

More deliberations went on, followed by eating and drinking until about 10.pm when I finally left with my in-laws with singing and dancing as my family walked me outside, officially telling me good-bye from my father's compound.

These ritual practices show that traditionally speaking, I am not the product of my biological parents only, but a product of the fertility that comes from my ancestors and my patrilineage. To restore this fertility, my patrilineage in particular needs to be well fed since it is considered that my matrilineage have eaten before, with the payment of my mother's bride price. This means that, first, fertility is obviously considered as something linked to a woman's patrilineage. Secondly, the patrilineage fertility is obviously proven by the capacity of this woman to have children. And finally, the patrilineage fertility

needs restoration, hence the food and drinks that go with the bride price.

The traditional wedding celebrations that I have discussed show that individual family members' perceptions and claims on their children (in this case their migrants) vary and involve a fair amount of contestation. They provide a basis for understanding the complex social, economic, emotional, and cultural relations that are involved in contemporary marriage negotiations vis-à-vis transnational migration. For example, in the case of Stephen mentioned earlier, it was alleged that he was being charged to pay a higher bride price because he was a bushfaller, a situation which he wanted to avoid by not wanting his bride's uncles know who he was. Similarly in my own case, my fiancé's aunt had accused me of plotting with my family to charge them a higher bride price because their son is a bushfaller. At the same time, my cousin and maternal aunts were very disappointed that nothing was added to the list of bride wealth payment. Whereas some families would consider the educational and employment status as well as the physical location of their daughter in deciding the bride wealth²²², this was not the case with my family. And that is why some think that in my family, women are just given as dash.

For my cousin and maternal aunts, my husband was not the one who brought me over to Europe, I travelled to Europe as an independent woman; and this therefore meant that he had not invested in me and should pay retroactively for it. Also, they disapproved my paternal uncles' logic that the marriage payments should not exceed that of my mum. My mum was not educated, she didn't have a job, and most importantly she was not a bushfaller. If other families take these factors into consideration in deciding the marriage payments for their daughters, it was only logical that, according to my cousin, my family should have done the same thing.

In my point of view, it would be fair to say that bride price cannot be understood as a compensation for the money invested by the parents in the raising and education of the girl. It is a compensation

²²² For example the mother of a bride might give excuses to her husband's family not to charge her potential bushfaller son-in-law with a high bride price. This is to protect her daughter's interest because she knows this bushfaller son-in-law would still have to spend money to bring his wife (their daughter) over to bush.

given to the lineage because it is the lineage that is considered as the essential fertility force that has given birth to the girl (and it is this force that has to be restored with bride price). This is why among some Bafut families, people stick with the idea that bride price for a daughter should not be bigger than the one given for the mother otherwise it would be as if the lineage fertility was considered differently (less in the mother's case and more in the daughter's case which would be like saying the daughter's birth is more important than the mother's birth meanwhile there cannot be any daughter without a mother) whereas every proof of its fertility power (giving birth to one child) should be considered equally. This argument resonates with another one that says that bride price should never be too high in order to allow people continue looking for brides in their ethnic group. Fecundity and fertility, the amount of marriages and births celebrated are what count, not to realise the market value of such or such person.

In sum what this tells us is how customs are being contested by contemporary socio-economic events. In some cases, families are responding accordingly whereas in some families like mine, these new interpretations are resisted. This rationale of acceptance and resistance came out clearly in relation to the fear of witchcraft. Some families fear that the presence of their bushfaller son or daughter during traditional weddings means exposing him/her to danger so they opt to do the marriage in their absence. For instance, Sylvia (a friend of mine) and her husband refused to travel to Cameroon for their traditional marriage but rather sent money for the ceremony to be done in their absence. My friend told me: "I don't want all those traditional things to be rubbed on my body and I don't want to invite witchcraft"²²³.

Nonetheless the bush or bushfaller factor manifests differently for church weddings and this further shows the effect of bushfalling in the Cameroonian society to which I turn next.

²²³ My friend and her husband did travel home a few months later for their church wedding. For church weddings, the extended families are not concerned. They may or might not be invited because they have no role to play. The main person here is the priest or pastor.

“A whole bushfaller?”: the social economy of bushfaller weddings

Social economy focuses on the relationship between social behaviour and economics by examining how social norms, ethics, and other social philosophies that influence people's (consumer) behaviour shape an economy— a society²²⁴. In this sub-section, I examine how bushfallers respond to a socially expected behaviour to be distinct from non-bushfallers by way of being ostentatious. I do so by looking at what has become known as bushfaller weddings. Whereas some bushfallers tend to frown at high bride price payment, they are happy to display their bushfaller status in other settings; notably by way of dressing, riding big cars, and organising huge church weddings.

After the traditional wedding of Sylvia and Michael which was done in Cameroon in their absence, they were now prepared to go home 7 months later for their church wedding. Both Sylvia and Michael live in Switzerland. They are both Protestants and come from the seaside town of Limbe in Cameroon. Michael travelled to Switzerland for studies in 2006. At the end of his degree in Marketing and Finance, he got a job in a bank and later got married to his Congolese wife in 2009. In 2010, they had a daughter but by 2011, the relationship was tearing apart. In 2012, they divorced and in 2013, Michael started dating Sylvia, a Cameroonian who had travelled to Switzerland after 5 years in Italy. Their traditional wedding took place in Cameroon in April 2014 and they travelled to Cameroon in December 2014 for their church wedding. Sylvia works as aide soignante (assistant nurse) in a home for the elderly while Michael now has a better position at the bank. In preparation for their wedding, Sylvia told me “one only gets to marry once so I want my wedding to be a come-see-go-talk”. She laughed as she spoke.

In preparation for the wedding, Sylvia and Michael decided that the drinks that would be served on each of the guests' table would be foreign drinks. Michael gave money to one of his friends in Germany to buy and shipped all the beer, wine, and even soft drinks mainly

²²⁴ <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-economics.asp> (accessed 19.07.2016).

Fanta, Coke, and Sprite. The wedding invitations were printed in England. Sylvia said “I don’t want those locally made poor quality invitations made in Cameroon”. Sylvia, two of her friends, and I choose the design from the varieties of sample wedding invitations online. 500 invitations were printed and shared equally between Sylvia and Michael. We also choose the wedding gown, the bridesmaid’s dresses and shoes which were all bought in the US. The shirts, ties, shoes, and suits of the groomsmen were bought in Switzerland. Even the paper napkins were bought in Switzerland. Sylvia said she wanted the paper napkins to match with their dresses which also did match with their wedding colours which were lemon-green and white. In short, almost everything concerning dressing was “made in bush”.

The wedding hall was the hall of the biggest hotel in Limbe. Canopies were set outside for those who wanted to feel some fresh breeze flowing into the hall from the Atlantic Ocean (the hotel is a few meters away from it). One of the top catering companies in Douala was hired. Six weeks before departure to Cameroon, Sylvia, I, and another friend sat down to sum up the entire expenditure. All the money that had been spent including miscellaneous spending was 14,200CHF (about 7.1 million FCFA) which is far more than what an average church wedding in Cameroon would costs. I echoed that “this was a real bushfaller wedding”. Another friend chipped in and said: “when someone is a bushfaller his/her wedding has to be distinct. Sylvia your wedding will be bushfaller wedding par excellence. Yours will be more than all those bushfaller weddings in Limbe. You know it will be December where everyone will want to show that they are from bush...” We all laughed and Sylvia responded that: “I don’t want to be like one of those pretending that they want to do bushfaller wedding but end up doing the same thing like non-bushfallers. If you want to do a bushfaller wedding, do it, if you want to do a normal wedding, do it”. The friend sitting next to me confirmed that “some people fail to realise that everyone has to cut their coats according to their material²²⁵, they just want to show

²²⁵ ‘To cut your coat according to your material’ is a popular saying in Anglophone Cameroon which translates as to do things according to one’s capability and capacity— financial or otherwise.

off but have nothing to offer. For example last two years I attended one wedding in Kumba and it was below standard. This guy was an Etasien²²⁶ and his wife was in Germany but their wedding was very local. People were even gossiping; saying, a whole bushfaller? Look at the type of wedding they organised”. Sylvia and the friend immediately burst out into laughter and Sylvia said “I don’t want that kind of embarrassment”.

Sylvia and Michael decided to leave Switzerland two weeks before their wedding. Sylvia said they decided that because “I want to still be looking fresh on my wedding day. If I go early, the sun in Cameroon will make me look cranky before my big day”²²⁷. While in Cameroon, I went to Limbe a day before the wedding to help Sylvia. Her hair and make-up and that of the bridesmaids were done by a hairdresser who only uses American products. As a result, her prices are 7 times higher than what will be charged in a normal hairdressing saloon. The church hall and the wedding hall were well-decorated. There were many bushfallers that attended the ceremony. The wedding cortege was amazing, neighbours came out to watch. The first car in front was a new Prado that was driven by Michael’s friend from Germany. Sylvia and Michael sat in a limousine. Their car and the first 15 cars in the wedding cortege were well-decorated to match with their wedding colours. Michael’s mum was dressed in a shiny-high-quality lace that was bought from Nigeria, so too was Sylvia’s mum, while her dad wore the same material but sewn in a male pattern. The uncle who represented Michael’s dad was dressed in a suit which Michael had bought in Switzerland (Michael’s dad died many years ago).

²²⁶ Etasien is a Pidgin English slang referring to Cameroonian migrants in the United States of America (USA). It is some kind of French and pidgin mix together. It comes from the French word *État* which means State. One might also argue that it comes from the French appellation of United States of America— *État-Unis*. Therefore Etasien might have been a contraction of “*Etatsunien*”. Over time, Anglophone Cameroonians started referring to the US as *Etas* (as in States, just like an American will say I am from the States) and Cameroonian migrants in the US as Etasien.

²²⁷ In Cameroon, it is assumed that bushfallers ought to be looking fresh, not cranky. The weather in bush makes them look as such. On one occasion, a friend gossiped to me that her sister’s fiancé was very kind-hearted but he didn’t look fresh like a bushfaller.

After the church ceremony, guests went directly to the wedding hall. Entrance to the hall was strictly on invitation. Local security guards were hired to check invitations and enforce order. The meal was buffet style and the hosts and hostesses made sure that drinks were replenished on any table that ran out. Two Cameroonian musicians were hired to entertain the guests. Snippets from the attendees indicated that everyone was satisfied. The ceremony went on till 4.am. As the couple was leaving, people began to leave one after another. Some people packed some drinks to take with them. As I walked out of the gate followed by another friend, I overheard a guy telling his friend: “my man this wedding was one in town. These bushfallers will kill us”. Then his friend confirmed “yes, it is really a bushfaller wedding. This people have dough (money)”. They continued their discussion as they walked into their car while I waited for my friend to unlock her car for me to get in and drive home.

The birth celebration of a bushfaller’s child: bushfaller “born-house”

“If you are growing up as a child and your father is a faller, your future is already guaranteed, you will not know what they call suffering” (remark made by a girl in Cameroon).

In Cameroon, the birth of a child is a communal event; it is celebrated by all the members of a community. When a woman gives birth, she usually stays in a hospital for a few days or longer depending on her postnatal health conditions before she is discharged. On the day when she is supposed to be discharged, neighbours prepare food and the husband buys drinks to feed the celebrants. Many different dishes can be prepared but it is mandatory to have the “born-house plantain”²²⁸ in the menu. The size of the

²²⁸ Nyamnjoh and Rowlands, (2013) in their study maintain that Cameroonians in the diaspora also carry out birth celebrations (and the same is true in the case of funerals). In their study of nurturing as a way of life for Cameroonian migrants in South Africa, these authors note that the “born-house plantain” is usually prepared with much palm oil, the same as it is rubbed on a woman to enhance fertility or as a symbol of fertility during traditional weddings.

birth celebration ceremony²²⁹ in terms of food prepared, drinks bought, and the number of attendees depends on the financial capability of the host family²³⁰. In what follows, I describe an example of the birth celebration of a bushfaller's child.

Betty is a friend of mine and we often communicate. By the time I went home in December 2014, Betty had just given birth to a baby girl with her bushfaller boyfriend²³¹. I went to her apartment, a comfortable three bedrooms, one living room, two toilets, a kitchen, and balcony. There are flat screen TVs in both the living room and the master bedroom. I called Betty and she directed me to where she was staying. As I walked in, Betty introduced her boyfriend to me as her husband. He was also visiting in December. We greeted each other and laughed how we only talked on the phone but never had the time to meet up even though we live in the same country. Then Betty told me: "Chris, this is my saviour, pointing to her husband. He is really my saviour, I can't lie. If not for him, in short many things would have gone wrong. I didn't just want to be telling you every problem on phone", Betty explained. I carried the baby and offered the present I had brought to Betty. Betty's husband went out to visit his mum who lives in another city, so Betty and I sat and chatted for two hours. She explained to me all what had gone wrong with her ex-boyfriend who left for South Africa. Betty explained all what her new man is doing and has done for her including opening up a business for her, a monthly upkeep, taking care of Betty's mum, to cite a few examples. We chatted for two hours and I told Betty I had to be on my way. Before leaving, Betty informed me of the "born-house" (birth celebration) which was to take place in two weeks.

Given that Betty's boyfriend/husband is a bushfaller, her born-house was not supposed to be like any ordinary born-house. It had to meet a bushfaller standard. Betty is a member of a youth association and each meeting member is supposed to come with one

²²⁹ In Pidgin English, a birth celebration ceremony is called "a born-house".

²³⁰ Birth celebrations are very popular in Cameroon and it is a ceremony where the entire community welcomes the arrival of the child. In big cities such as Yaoundé and Douala, such celebrations do not seem to be very common.

²³¹ Betty and her boyfriend are not yet married but when she talks about him, she refer to him as 'my husband'.

soap, (the biggest size C.C.C savon)²³² according to the rules concerning born-house. The food and the drinks were plentiful. As we sat in the kitchen preparing the various meals on the menu, one meeting member congratulated Betty for having a very nice and beautiful apartment—: “Betty you are doing fine, I di see say your man di hold you well” (I can see that your husband is taking good care of you). Betty smiled and replied: “we thank God, it is just God”.

As Betty went back into the room, one of the girls from the meeting who was preparing the “born-house plantain” (which is usually prepared with much oil, signifying birth) poured the oil into the pot with no cautiousness. Another girl exclaim: “stop! Do you want to finish Betty’s oil”? She asked. Another added that even if the oil finished there was no problem, Betty’s husband is a bushfaller so they should not forget that they are here for a bushfaller born-house. The six girls that were in the kitchen with me burst into laughter. Another girl added, “But it is true. Can’t you see for yourself? Betty has two flat screen TVs, one in the living room and the other in the bedroom. She is not at our level”, she concluded. “It is not her fault”, another girl echoed; “when God blesses you, you have to eat”, she added. “It is true my sister”, another girl confirmed. Then she continued that “If you are growing up as a child and your father is a faller, your future is already guaranteed, you will not know what they call suffering”. Another girl chipped in and said: “You can see how Betty’s daughter is looking fresh, she looks very “ajebotar” (meaning rich people’s life style) and not like us “kwakoro” (opposite to ajebotar), and they all burst into laughter.

Then came the time of the celebration which was in the evening. All meeting members were dressed in their uniforms, which was a long floating dress made of African fabric (wax)²³³, it is called “kabba” in pidgin. The MC (master of ceremony) began by thanking

²³² Complexe Chimique Camerounais (CCC) is an industrial company based in Douala that produces soaps and other chemicals used for agriculture. It is said that CCC savons are the best.

²³³ The term African fabric is a generic term for the different types of African prints. These African prints are of different types and quality e.g. super prints, lace, wax, to name a few. Their quality also varies depending on where they are made. For instance, the wax made in Holland has a better quality than a Nigerian wax or an Ivorian wax.

all those present, followed by a word of prayer. A song was sung by members of Betty's association followed by a brief musical interlude by the DJ. The MC then invited everyone to the table, reminding them that there was so much to eat and drink: "we came here to celebrate with our sister, and she has really welcomed us in the right way. There is much to eat and drink so please feel free", he said. Members took their turns to the table while I stood watch with one of Betty's cousin making sure no one took more than two slices of each of the assorted meat that was on the table. While serving the food, we told people to come back for more if they wanted. By 11pm when everyone had eaten, one of the members took up the microphone and said she just wanted to thank their sister Betty for such a very good party. They have eaten well and drank well. She joked that: "I hope people can still remember the way to their various homes, don't fall. If you can't, you can sleep here and go in the morning", she said. As the members began to leave, some of them packed the leftover food, appreciating the party, most of them confirming that, indeed, this was a bushfaller born-house!!

The monetisation of funerals: bushfaller "cry-die"

As de Witte (2003: 531) has shown in the case of Ghana, money and death celebrations are inextricably interwoven, that is to say, they flow together. Every death celebration triggers a flow of money and funeral business flourishes. These events are times in which families compete for prestige and showing off wealth while at the same time publicly conforming to the norms of solidarity and respect for the dead. De Witt analysis resonates with the case of Cameroon. As a matter of fact, the words "befitting burial" is a jargon that implies that a funeral should be grand and successful. A successful and complete burial cycle can take a few weeks up to years from the day of death to when all traditional rites relating to the deceased are completed. While I do not intend to go in-depth into these burial practices, it is important to mention that there have been increased flows of money going into funerals in the wake of increasing transnational migration and remittances in Cameroon. This has resulted to what have become known as "bushfaller cry-die" against

“normal cry-die” (non-bushfaller cry-die). Mazzucato et al, (2006) observe the same pattern of funeral monetisation within the context of transnational migration and remittances in Ghana. They note that funerals are becoming important ceremonies where migrants play important roles in the organisation notably in the financing. “Funerals thus give rise to the flows of money, goods and people across national borders...” (pg.1047).

Funerals are important homecoming events for migrants. Besides going home in December for visits, funerals are a time when migrants are compelled to come home (unless decided otherwise). This is especially the case when a migrant loses a parent. In Cameroon, funerals usually consist of between 4-5 stages depending on who died and depending on the ethnic group. The first stage is when the family, friends, and neighbours come together immediately after the news of a death is made public. During this first stage, the family members of the deceased hold meetings to decide how long the corpse would stay in the mortuary, the date of removal and burial, food to be prepared and drinks to be bought, and the costs involved. In short this stage is concerned with the logistics of the funeral.

The second stage is the removal of the corpse from the mortuary which is usually on a Friday followed by laying-in-state at the home of the deceased in which mourners come to pay their last respects. On such days, a priest or pastor gives the eulogy. In other cases, the corpse is taken to church. Burial follows the next day. Depending on where the person died, or on the decisions taken by the family, or the preference of the deceased before his/her death, the corpse can either be transported to the deceased home village for burial or buried at the residence in the city or town where s/he lived.

The third stage is the funeral rites that take place in the aftermath of the burial. The timing and the various rites performed vary for the different ethnic groups. For some ethnic groups, it is at this stage that the property of the deceased is shared amongst his/her kindred. For others, it is during this time that the next-of-kin is officially announced and co-opted as the successor. Depending on the ethnic group, there might also be a fourth and/or fifth stage where immediate families meet to shave their hair or other activities.

Migrants abroad remit for various reasons including for the organisation of funerals. For example Emelda told me that through the money she sent to her father when her paternal uncle died, he was able to give her uncle a befitting burial. She explained to me that this uncle was killed by one of the people in the village who was very jealous of him because he owned so many pieces of land. She explained that:

It was also a way to annoy my dad because they were saying in the village that he is successful and stays in town without thinking about them. So when my uncle died, my dad wanted to organise a big funeral to disappoint my uncle's killer's intention of making him (my dad) angry. So when my uncle's corpse was taken out of the mortuary, there was a band that was hired by my dad. It was a market day and the band played from the market square up to my uncle's residence. There was a lot to eat and drink and everyone in the village was talking about the funeral; that it was indeed celebrated in grand style. So you see, this annoyed the killers who saw that my dad was not depressed by his brother's death but instead took it as a challenge and organised a huge funeral for his brother.

It is very common in Cameroon to find that families with migrants abroad organise larger and more lavish funerals than those families without²³⁴. Such was the case with the funeral of ma Paulina²³⁵:

The mother in-law of my neighbour's sister had just passed-on. My neighbour explained to me that "Ma Paulina was a woman who

²³⁴ Mazzucato et al, (2006: 1053) also observe the same in Ghana.

²³⁵ Beside the funeral of Ma Paulina, I had attended many similar bushfaller funerals in Cameroon before my travel abroad. Once we were at the mortuary for the removal of the corpse of a friend's bushfaller uncle who died in Germany. Two girls dressed in black blazers and short skirts with dark sun-shades walked up and down aimlessly as we stood there waiting for the corpse. One lady shouted at them to sit still, then she said: "children of these days...Funerals now have become places to come and show short skirts". Another lady commented that: "na massa them come fine no be say they come na die...them don hear say plenty bushfaller them dey around..." (meaning: "they came to look for potential suitors not for the funeral. They have heard that there are many bushfallers around").

had lived her life. All her children are in America. She goes to America like someone goes to Bamenda and back. Her children have built her a very nice house. She suffered for her children when her husband passed-on and the children too didn't let her down", she noted. It was her first child who first went to America and later brought over all the other siblings. Ma Paulina has six children. She had been sick during her last visit to America in 2014; she stayed there for six months and told her children that she would like to return home. Her children refused but she insisted. It was as if she knew that she will die so she didn't want to make her children suffer paying so much money to bring her corpse to Cameroon, my neighbour explained.

She came back to Cameroon by the end of November and by early December, she passed-on at the age of 85. "Mami don chop before e die (mum has eaten before she passed-on), her children took very good care of her", my neighbour said. With the passing away of Ma Paulina, all her children were expected to come home. The corpse stayed in the mortuary for six weeks waiting for the arrival of her children. "This die na come-and- see-go talk" (this death is a come and see, go and tell), commented my neighbour. All arrangements have been made for the burial. The various ethnic and church association groups that Ma Paulina belonged were busy preparing.

On the day the corpse was removed from the mortuary, I followed my neighbour to the funeral ceremony. The various association and church groups were all in their uniforms which were of different styles sewn from various kinds of African fabric. A large effigy of Ma Paulina was hung about 5 meters up across the road leading to her house. Those who didn't have uniforms wore black clothes. Family members, friends and members of the community wore the "asoebi"²³⁶ sewn in different styles. Most mourners had a

²³⁶ Asoebie (pronounced ashoeeybee) is a Nigerian word (that is also use in Anglophone Cameroon) which refers to outfit made from matching fabric to be worn by a group of people to a party, wedding, or funeral. Wearing a certain asoebi identifies the group of wearers. In the case of funerals, the asoebies are decided by the family members some weeks or months before the removal of the corpse from the mortuary. Mourners are usually expected to buy the asoebi from the family of the deceased but they can also buy it directly from the market in case the family of the deceased ran out of stock.

brooch pinned on the breast pocket. The brooch was made out of a photo of Ma Paulina in her church choir uniform. The funeral cortege that drove into the residence of Ma Paulina was very long. It included private cars, buses and taxis as well as motor bikes that were hired to transport mourners from the mortuary and back. There was also a cameraman that was hired to take photos and videotape the entire ceremony. The coffin had a sophisticated design; it had the shape of an airplane. When the coffin was brought out of the hearse, a friend of my neighbour said she heard the coffin costed a million FCFA.

The different meeting groups were sitting under the canopies on the different sections allocated for them. “This die is service traiteur”, my neighbour’s friend noted. “Mami has live her life, it is time to go and rest. In such occasion, we just come to eat and thank God for mami’s life”, she added. There was singing and dancing from the different groups which was temporarily halted at 8pm when the pastor delivered the eulogy²³⁷.

Drinks were self-service; the Cameroon beer company Brasseries du Cameroon was hired and had a stand for beer on draught. Food was prepared and served by a local restaurant that was hired. People were many, from small kids and youths in the neighbourhood, to strangers from far and near. Sitting next to me were two women from the neighbourhood where Ma Paulina lived; they have also come to pay their last respects to Ma Paulina. One of them said: “if it is money that could save life and keep people alive forever, mami Paulina will still be alive today”. Her friend confirmed, and added that: “but mami is blessed, she has lived her life, let her go and rest. And her children “cried” her really well. They prepare well for their mum’s death”, she added as she sipped her beer.

Just as they were chatting, another woman walked to them with a canned beer. “Where do you get that from”? One of the ladies

²³⁷ Jindra (1997: 29-30) has carried out extensive anthropological study on death celebration (“cry-die”) practices in the Grassfield. He maintains that “the size of death celebration increases as the deceased is older, has more children, or has attained a measure of status either through traditional titles or success in the modern economy or state. “Bad deaths” (suicide, leprosy, “swollen belly” or death by lightning) are not given death celebrations. The pollution of these kinds of deaths are something to be eliminated”.

asked. "It is there on the table, near where you have Brasseries beer. But this one is from white man kontri", she said. "Yes", the other lady answered, "that is why I am asking because I know this is from white man kontri". "Go there and take yours, there are many still left on the table", she said. As the lady walked to the table, her friend asked her to bring one for her too. She came back with four canned beers, gave two to her friend and took two. She didn't drink the beers immediately; rather, she kept them in her hand bag. While doing so she said "thanks to Ma Paulina man go taste all kind white man cargo" (thanks to Ma Paulina one will taste all sorts of western goods); they both laughed as they chatted. My neighbour asked me if I wanted to eat and I said no, I was fine. There was continuous singing and dancing from the different groups until the early hours in the morning. The burial took place the next day at 4pm.

In sum, what we get from these three events of church weddings, birth, and death celebrations is that there are occasions for display of wealth for bushfallers. This form of representation of wealth by bushfallers during such ceremonies is synonymous to the ways 'big men' in Africa display wealth and power (Bayart, 1993). If the 'big men' gets their wealth and power through political connections which give them access and the opportunity to enrich themselves with state funds, migration has also created an opportunity for upward social mobility for many families in Cameroon who otherwise would never be that wealthy.

Just like in the case of bushfaller weddings, bushfaller cry-die entails a considerable amount of spending dispersed through different crafts and activities for instance money to carpenters for the coffins some of which can be ostentatiously designed or customised, the expenses for printing of brooches, the cost of videotaping, the selling and buying of "asoebies", the elaborate organization of preparing and serving the food and drinks, not forgetting music, dance and cultural displays. De Witte (2003) describes this as the funeral business.

Although such lavish death celebrations can be criticised as a 'waste of money' (given that the person is already dead) by some people in Cameroon and even some migrants, most migrants feel obliged to bend to social pressure and organise lavish funerals. For

example when the father of one of my association member passed on, each member contributed 100CHF. She received the sum of 1400CHF from the association and there were other private donations which amounted up to 2000CHF. After organising a wake-keeping service for her father in Switzerland, she travelled home for the burial. She told me her own personal spending for the burial of her father was 5000CHF. Although she had brothers and sisters, she spent the most. With this increasing flows of money invested in funerals as the case study of Ma Paulina demonstrates, Mazzucato et al, (2006: 1067) concludes that funerals are one of the main non-subsistence uses of remittances after business, housing, education and health.

Moreover, we can agree with Olwig, (2002) assertion that funerals and other rites of passage are important in allowing migrants to maintain ties with their home communities. They are an important factor in reinforcing the ties migrants entertain with their families and their communities. Although they live far away, migrants tend to remain engaged to events that take place at home. This level of engagement could stem from migrants having to fund these activities (partially or totally). Thus for Mazzucato et al, (2006), despite such high spending in the case of bushfaller cry-die, funerals are not 'wasteful' cultural events. Rather, it is a way for the living to honour their dead, and for the living to reinforce their ties.

“I am not a money-making machine”: On the moral economy of remittances

“Today money, tomorrow money, money-money all the time. I am not a money-making machine...I don’t harvest money from a tree” (Nchuding, Cameroonian migrant in Sweden).

“Remittances are like a tap of running water, I need to open from up here so that they can drink from down there in Cameroon” (Paul, Cameroonian migrant in Switzerland).

“Attending to a need is not about coming from the same womb with someone....Giving to your parents is a form of blessing....So instead of us/people, (migrants) complaining about excessive demand for remittances from people back at home, we should rather be aware that opportunities come with responsibilities” (Matilda, Cameroonian migrant in Switzerland).

Introduction

Each time discussions on remittances come up between and amongst Cameroonian migrants, there is a mix feeling of discontent, but also of acceptance, gratitude, and pride. In this chapter I examine the socio-cultural, economic, legal, and moral norms that determine remittance flows and (re)distribution. These collective sentiments that guide the decision and the action to *send* remittances are what I call the moral economy of ‘giving’. This moral economy of giving is embedded in the moral principle of sharing, involving distribution and redistribution such that failure to comply with this moral duty could bring about great sanctions, for instance the fact that the migrant suddenly realizes that things are not moving on well for him/her.

The title of a newspaper article (see appendix 5) confirms migrants’ constant commitment towards their countries; the title reads “migrants increasingly more generous with their countries” mentioning that close to 6.5 milliards of Swiss Francs was sent by migrants from Switzerland in 2013. The author further mentions that

this money sent, first and foremost, serve to cover fundamental needs and to ameliorate the daily life of the receivers.

As indicated in the quotes at the beginning of this chapter, migrants are aware of the responsibilities and obligations they have towards fulfilling familial and non-familial demand for remittances. And despite persistent complaints from many of these migrants about the pressure to remit, they nonetheless have to reckon with the fact that “opportunities give rise to responsibilities”. This explains why some migrants are so proud of themselves when they explain how much they have done for their families, describing how their hard work and the remittances they send have led to a positive change in the social and economic status of their families back home, amidst persistent complaints about demand.

There are many forms of remittances, sent by individual migrants and migrants diaspora associations. The former benefit mostly family and friends while the latter targets community development projects (as documented in the works of Page (2007), Mercer et al (2009), Tchouassi and Sikod (2010), Teke (2010), Ollong (2013) whose studies investigate the role of Cameroonian diaspora association to hometown developments). Remittances can be both financial and non-financial (the latter also known as social remittances) involves the ideas and life patterns that returning migrants bring with them (Levitt, 1998).

Financial remittances have predominantly been defined as the flow of money through formal and informal channels from migrants to families and friends at home. However, Hernandez and Coutin, (2006) and Carling (2008) argue that not all remittances flow from migrants to families and friends ‘at home’, there are also different forms of remittances from migrants to fellow migrants in other countries. Carling, (2008: 47) cited the example of remittances flowing from Somali migrants in the diaspora to Somali migrants and refugees in Kenya.

This chapter investigates various forms of remitting (‘giving’) by male and female individual migrants. The conflicts that characterized such acts of ‘giving’, the choice of the receiver, how much is sent, and the sanctions that befall those who fail to remit and to share are some of the issues dealt with in this chapter. First, let me begin with

some of the challenges these migrants faced upon arrival and the difficulties of living abroad.

Challenges upon arrival and beyond

Emelda told me that things were not easy for her when she came. She explained that:

Upon arrival, I started to see the real phases of life in bush— the difficulties and successes. But as a newly arrived, I needed to stand firm to navigate through the rough waters of bush. When we came, the other Cameroonians that we met in Zurich who had travelled through this same agency advised us to look for white men and get married so that we can have the papers to stay here. What kind of school is it? What do we mean by we are going to school? They asked. They said we are not the first to come here and those of them who have been here before knows the situation here. That is why they are advising us to be wise and to follow the right way. And some of the girls that we came together left school and got married to whites, and now they have Swiss nationality. They said their intention was not really the school but to get the visa to come to Switzerland.

Also, I was having some problems with the accommodation the university provided for me. I was sharing a room with one Russian girl. Our beds were adjacent to each other and mine was close to the window. She opened the window every night, even in the winter, saying that she needed to let in some fresh air. And for me, this was very cold especially given that my bed was near the window. So I complained to the school authorities that I want to change room but they told me I can't change; because of this, I had problems with the school administration. Besides, there were some problems even amongst the school authorities which created some division amongst the shareholders of the school and the university was later relocated to Geneva with a different name. Because of all these problems, I wanted them to refund the 25 million FCFA I paid. In addition, they told me in Cameroon that I was coming to study MBA, but when I came, it wasn't the case. Rather, it was a master in Business and

Finance which is what I already did for my first master degree in Yaoundé. When I found out that it wasn't an MBA, I was so disappointed. It seems to me they were just interested to take money and make students come to Switzerland, it is a business, you know. Nonetheless I did my best to study hard and to finish.

Just before I finished my studies up to when I was finally done, I started an internship with the UN, but it was unpaid. So I use to go to work during the day and in the evening I go for my housekeeping job in a hotel. A few months later, I got another internship with the International Trade Centre (ITC). I was employed after my internship and I worked from 2010-2012 when my contract ended and I went back to Cameroon. But before I started working, things were not really easy for me because I was not asking my parents for money from back home as I know they didn't have any money. All what they had, they sold to raise the money for me to travel. I struggled to take care of myself but I didn't tell them what I was going through, it was when I returned to Cameroon in 2012 that I told them all what I went through and my parents were so surprise. For example in the second year of my program, I had to struggle to finish paying the remaining school fees. You know, the 25 million FCFA which I paid to them in Cameroon before I got the visa was for tuition including accommodation for year 1. My uncle who was in Italy helped me. It was 10 thousand Swiss francs. So when I started working, I paid him back. But when he was giving me the money, he didn't say that he was lending it, but of course I knew that it was some kind of loan. So when I got my job with the UN, I paid him back.

During my first stay in Switzerland, I did a lot for my family. I was sending money to everyone including cousins, neighbors, uncles and aunts. I ensured that my parents were doing well, even my siblings, although my siblings didn't recognize my efforts. Take for example the case of my elder sister Lisa. She got married in 2008 during her studies at the University of Yaoundé where she was studying to become a physiotherapist. Unfortunately when she was third year of her studies, she got married and stopped her education. My parents were against this marriage but Lisa being a 'special' child, my parents had to give-in to her decision. When it comes to my sister, my parents just let her do whatever she wants because if one tries to

object, she falls sick, I mean really sick. That is why I said she is a 'special child'. We thought she was an "obanje"²³⁸. Even when she passed her GCE Advance level exam, my parents were like wow! Because they weren't sure she could go that far. Her husband didn't have a reliable job but through the connection of my mum, he secured a job as divisional inspector of transport in the Far North region of Cameroon. Only a year later in their marriage, things became sour and violence and maltreatment characterized the everyday life of Lisa in her matrimonial home.

Seeing these, I bought physiotherapy instruments and sent to her in Cameroon. But I was so annoyed because all she did was to install the instruments at one corner in her house just to do massage for her husband. When things became sour and Lisa could not support the marriage, she left and came to my parents' house leaving everything behind, I mean everything. I don't understand why she did that knowing who her husband was. He surely took the things and gave it to one of his girlfriends. When she came, she told my parents she would like to continue school but she does not want to stay in Cameroon. She would prefer to go abroad, she just wants to leave by any means possible and start a new life.

Even that my other elder sister who is married in Douala, I sent her money so many times to do business, close to 2 million FCFA. First I sent 750, then 650, then 200 etc., close to 2 million, but what did she do with the money, nothing. I am sure she took the money and gave it to her husband who just owned it.

The difficulties of living in bush

After two weeks in Switzerland, Cynthia had to find her way out. She received all kinds of advice from friends. Some told her to seek asylum, others told her to 'go underground'²³⁹, and they were willing

²³⁸ "Obanje" identifies a child that is born over and over again. "Obanje" children are said to belong to the spirit or marine world. When they are born, they will eventually become sick, then die and go back to where they came from. It is use in Anglophone Cameroon to describe any child who gets sick constantly and the illness cannot be medically diagnosed.

²³⁹ To go 'underground' means to be undocumented, to live in hiding and use other peoples' documents where/when needed.

to give her their papers so she can look for jobs. After three months without papers in Switzerland, Cynthia decided to seek asylum. She first wanted to move to France, but friends advised her to stay in Switzerland. She risked being deported on her way to France in case of any police control at the border. Friends coached her on what to say when called up for interview. With her application on the way, she was given a room to stay in one of the asylum residential homes plus a monthly allowance of 400 Swiss francs for basic needs. Cynthia had to remit part of her allowance to her husband to repay the money he borrowed. She intended to use the balance from her allowance together with the income she was earning from her small jobs to legalize her stay in Switzerland in the event that the asylum claim didn't go through.

As an asylum seeker, she got a temporal stay and so could look for jobs under her own name. This too was a problem because employers do not wish to employ asylum seekers since their stay is uncertain. Through a friend, Cynthia got a babysitting job. She negotiated with her employer and the money was paid to her in cash. She received 2000CHF a month as salary working Monday to Friday from 8.am to 7pm. With this money, Cynthia could save more and eventually finished paying off the debt of 1.5 million FCFA that her husband borrowed for her bushfalling project. With her babysitting job, Cynthia bought a piece of land and built a two apartment house in Cameroon. Money for the construction project was sent through her mum, and at other times through her husband and one trusted friend of hers depending on what needed to be purchased for the house. She also paid the school fees for her children who were in boarding schools and was always sending clothes, shoes, mobile phones, and other electronic devices each time she found someone going home. She also sent money and other items to some friends and cousins.

Cynthia also bought a second-hand Toyota corolla car and sent to one of her brothers who were troubling her for money every month. Cynthia told me "I bought him this taxi just so that I can live in peace, this brother of mine was a thorn in my flesh, so I just wanted

to settle him”, she said. Over time, she sent a second Toyota car²⁴⁰ to her husband for private use and one to her mum to use as taxi thereby providing a monthly source of income to her. After four years in the asylum home, Cynthia wanted to move out, but the only way she could do this was to get married to a Swiss or to someone who has Swiss residence. She made arrangements with one African immigrant who owned a Swiss passport. For this paper wedding to be done, Cynthia had to pay 30,000CHF. An advance fee of 10,000CHF was needed but Cynthia could only afford 6000CHF. The guy whom I shall call Jonathan accepted and all arrangements were made to set a date when they would get a civil wedding. After that, Cynthia will have to pay a minimum sum of 500CHF every month to Jonathan to match the 10,000CHF. The remaining 20,000CHF will be paid after she had gotten her permanent residence (permit C).

A week before the signing, Jonathan called Cynthia and said he was no longer interested in the business. Cynthia was so frustrated and accused some of her friends that they were the ones who have persuaded Jonathan to drop the business because they were jealous of her. Cynthia told me: “from then I stopped telling my friends my personal life be it in terms of any projects I am doing or even just small personal events. I think they were jealous because I have done things that even some of them who have papers haven’t done”. She added that “that is why they were jealous. For example I have built a house while some of them who have been here even for ten years have not been able to do so”.

When this failed, Cynthia asked her boss if she could issue an invitation letter to her husband to come and visit her. The idea was that when the husband comes, he too will ‘go underground’ and then try to ‘sort out himself’ (legalize his stay) later. In addition, Cynthia would get pregnant and travel to France to give birth. The idea was to look for someone with a French residence to father the child. In this way, Cynthia could get a stay in France and over time, her husband will join her. The invitation letter and all necessary

²⁴⁰ Toyota cars are preferred in Cameroon because it is said they are durable and less fuel consuming compared to other types of cars. In addition, the parts are affordable and can easily be found in local motor-spare part shops in case of breakdown.

documents were prepared and sent but unfortunately Cynthia's husband didn't get the visa.

A year later, Cynthia's asylum claim was rejected and she had to leave Switzerland. The flight ticket to Cameroon had been bought by the Swiss authority but before the departure date, she disappeared. Cynthia decided to try a second time to get a residence permit after her asylum claim had been rejected. A friend had connected her to someone in Italy who was willing to 'help'. She will have to go and register in Italy as an employee in a small enterprise owned by Anthonio. With this work permit, she could then apply for an Italian temporal residence. But when she explained this new deal to her husband, he refused the idea and suggested that he would rather prefer she returns home.

She persuaded her husband that she needed one more year to work and save money before she returned, as she didn't want to return empty-handed. In addition, she would like to start up a business upon her return. Her husband accepted her suggestion and Cynthia stayed and worked for another year before finally returning to Cameroon. Cynthia told me she was returning for good but recently when I spoke with her she told me she and the husband just played the American DV lottery. In case they win, they will migrate to America.

Beside Cynthia, Celestine also recounted some of the difficulties he faced and how he coped.

He explained that upon arrival in Ukraine things were very tough so he dropped out from school— "after all, I come here na for come find money" (meaning I came here to search for money), he said. Some friends accommodated him for the first two months, but after that he had to be on his own. He shared a room with another friend who was a student. And through this friend, he got to know many people and work connections. He started off working in building and construction companies, but he complained that it was a very tough job. He added that "the work can break someone's back". While doing this, he signed up for Russian classes and in a year, his Russian was advanced. Through his Ukrainian girlfriend, he started working as a Russian to English translator. After a few months of working as a translator, Celestine bought a car. He explained to me that: "When

I am going to work, I dress-up in suit. I bought this car because it helps to increase my status. People cannot even tell that I am undocumented. Besides, when working as a translator for these business people, you need to look smart. You don't have to appear shabby. Only your appearance and the way you talk, people will respect you. That is why I bought this car”.

With no legal residence, and with the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russian conflict, Celestine decided to try his way out. Through a friend, he met a Ukrainian broker who promised giving him a visa to Australia from Ukraine. He paid an advance fee equivalent to 1000CHF to the broker and waited for six months but nothing showed up. The broker never refunded the money. Instead he demanded more money and said that he wanted to try again. But this time, Celestine backed-off. Two months later, he met another broker who promised to issue him a student registration letter that would allow him to apply for a student visa (given that he had dropped out from school so his student visa could not be renewed). The broker charged an equivalent of 2300CHF. After three months, the broker issued him a university registration letter indicating that he was a student wanting to renew his resident permit. With this document, he applied for his resident permit and it was granted. With this resident permit, he applied and was admitted in a university where he is currently studying and in December 2015, he travelled to Cameroon with his Ukrainian girlfriend.

Celestine told me it hasn't been easy all this while, but sometimes families back home don't want to understand. Although he did explain to his family and siblings what he was going through, he still had to contribute to the payment of the school fees of his younger siblings. His father just lost his job as a lorry driver and now sits all day at home. With the pressure from families and friends demanding remittances, including his own father, he decided to buy him a car so that he can use it as a taxi. His elder sister in China is very supportive, Celestine said. She was very helpful when he was trying to legalize his stay in Ukraine; in the process, she sent 800 US dollars to Celestine. But even in the midst of his undocumented status, Celestine is confident that bush is the best. He told me:

“Bushfalling is good, even if it is not easy but it is good. I can never ever discourage anyone to fall bush. People just go home and tell people this and that about bush, whatever they say, at the end of the day, bush is the best”.

Celestine is planning to relocate to central Europe in the near future. First he intends to move to Slovenia or Bulgaria then look for means to get to central Europe. He told me he has friends in the Netherlands so he is planning to go there, but he will see into that with time. Even in the face of difficulties Celestine told me he can never discourage anyone from falling bush because it is the best thing to do.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of trust”: remittance channels, receivers, and conflicts

World Bank statistics show that remittances flow to Cameroon increase from 2210.419, 765US dollars between 2000-2004 to 244.059167US dollars between 2005-2009²⁴¹. These figures, however do not include unrecorded remittances sent via families and friends (informal channels). In trying to avoid paying for sending fees, migrants tend to send money through friends. For example when I was going home, a friend of mine gave me her money to put into my account and take it out when I was in Cameroon to give to her family. The charges paid for withdrawing the money from my account in Cameroon are less than what she would have paid to send the money via money transfer agencies.

Migrants don't always use informal means of money transfer. Given that money sent sometimes get 'lost' within family circuits, migrants carrying out investment projects back home want to keep track of how much has been sent. In this case, they will prefer sending money via formal channels so that the receipt is saved. One of my informants explain this to me in this way: “I would prefer to send my money through an agency so that when my brother wants to argue, I will show him all the receipts of the money I have sent to him for the

²⁴¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT> (accessed 30.09.2015)

construction... This cannot prevent him from eating my money but I will be able to show to him that, look, this is the amount of money I have sent. So show me the work that you have carried out with this money”.

Eggebo (2010: 26, 35-36) confirms that, sending remittances via money transfer agencies and saving receipts is a way for migrants to prove that although far away, they have been able to meet up with their family obligations. She makes the case that, remittance flows are significantly sanctioned by moral representations linked to structures of household, family and gender. These flows as part of human social relations can either reinforce or disrupt such relations. If remittance flows can either disrupt or reinforce social relations as Eggebo, (2010) noted, how do migrants chose who receives what is sent in the midst of all the doubts and fears?

To address this question, it is important to mention that even when remittances are sent via money transfer agencies, the choice of the receiver is carefully selected by the respective migrants after considering certain factors. At this juncture, I introduce the concept of the family manager (that is, the family remittance manager).

Receiving and/or managing remittances: the family manager

The family manager is the person in Cameroon who manages the remittances that are sent. This manager can be both the recipient and the person that manages the money. That is, if her/his level of education can allow him/her to fill in the required information in the receivers form at the money transfer agency, s/he receives the money that is sent and then uses it as instructed by the sender. In other cases, the receiver is separate from the family manager. In this case, his or her duty is only to receive the remittances that are sent and give them to the family manager who uses the money as instructed. This happens in cases where the family manager e.g. a parent cannot read and write (didn't go to school). In this case, a sibling or friend receives the money and give it to the parent who manages the money. Below is an example of a text message one of my informants sent to her sister (her remittance receiver and family manager) in Cameroon:

Hi sis, hope say all man dey fine. I don send that thing as promised. Here are the details

Sender: Matilda XXY

Receiver: Salome YYZ

Pin code: MCO3128733x

Amount 385,000cfa

Place: Express Union, Buea branch.

When you take it, give 50 to mama for her medicines, give 30 to papa. Use 200 for the school fees of peter and Gisele. Give uncle Martin 40 and also give 20 to aunty Biko. I didn't send anything to our neighbour mami Celine since her husband passed on, so give her 40. The remaining 5 is for your transport. I will send you something next month. Salute all man. Thks.

The message details how the money is to be distributed. I was with my informant Matilda when the money was sent. When we got home, and after sending the text message, she called her sister and repeated to her that the money should be used as instructed and that she should let her know once she collects the money. For many migrants, the family manager is carefully selected based on certain factors; important in this respect is the relationship between the sender and the family manager before and after migration. What is also important is how the family manager has proven him/herself to be trustworthy in relation to the remittances that s/he has to manage. Although traditional hierarchical rules relating to age (maturity) sometimes count in such decisions to choose the family manager, what is of prime importance is the nature of relationship and trust. This explains why the family manager can sometimes be chosen even outside the immediate family circles. Thus trusted friends whom migrants consider as their family can also be chosen as family managers. It is also important to mention that a migrant can have more than one family manager depending on the various projects for which the remittances are being sent. For example a migrant can have a manager that handles remittances for household and other family immediate basic needs and another manager that handles construction and other investment projects. Sometimes a single manager can handles both, it just depends how s/he has proven him/herself worthy over time. S/he can also handle the money of several migrants. For instance a family manager can handles the

money of a friend and a relative (s) or siblings resident in different countries.

Family managers can lose their position when they ‘misbehave’. For example in conducting research with the families of my informants in Cameroon, I met with parents, siblings, friends, cousins who explained to me why they have been chosen as family managers²⁴². Below are excerpts of some of the explanations they gave.

Irene, the elder sister of my informant Celestine told me:

This issue of money is very sensitive. I know that it is not easy over there. My younger sister and brother are really trying. They send me the money and then I take it to my parents. You see this book (she brought out a book from her cupboard), this is where I write down all the expenses on the money I received. I once had a problem with my parents because they accused me of not wanting to give them the money that their son has sent. The problem is that, if I just give everything to them at once, they will think there is so much money and they will easily consumed it and sit and wait for more. So I give them bit by bit. Whether it is money for feeding, or money to renovate the house, that is how I do. I quarrelled with my mum last month until my husband asked me to go give her all the money Celestine has sent. I said no, I won’t do that. I know that it is not easy for them over there. But for my parents, even if you tell them it is hard, the fact that they still see money coming up any time they want, they will not really understand how these children are struggling. For example Celestine didn’t have papers, it is only recently that he got his papers after 3 years. So all what he was sending, he told me he was using people’s papers to work and it is not always easy to do that. That is why I cannot eat his money. I am very conscious. Celestine and my other sister in China

²⁴² When families in Cameroon explained to me why they have been chosen as family managers, they described it as “I am the one who controls, or I am the one that manages all the dealings/projects of my brother or sister in XXX country”. Sometimes, they said “all money sent by XXX is received by me. If anyone needs something, they will have to come and see me and I will do as my brother/sister/friend/cousin (faller) instructs me”.

have seen that I don't use their money carelessly, that is why they have trusted me and they always send the money to me to give to my parents. For Maria, a trusted friend of Cynthia (one of my informants):

Affaire nkap no be matter for joke even when man na your best friend (money affairs are not joking matter even if someone is your best friend). Then she continued: let me tell you the trick in this business, it is about trust. This is what many people here don't know. If your bushfaller send you money, just use it as s/he has instructed. Once you are trusted, you will see that you can be having some favours from him/her without you even asking for anything. But people here don't understand that, they just think because it is money coming from bush, they can just use it anyhow, it is almost as if money from bush is free money. What people fail to understand is that once you are trusted, you might just sit like that and your faller can send you money for your own private use because s/he has seen that you use the money well in the things you were asked to do. For example, last time when I was sick, Cynthia sent me 50.000FCFA to go to the hospital. I didn't even call her to say I was sick, she called me and it happens that I was at hospital, and the next day she sent me money. But that is because for over 5 years I am the one that have been managing some of her things here in Cameroon. Sometimes when she sends me money to use to run her errands here, she will say "take this or that sum and buy something for yourself". I cannot eat someone's "sweat" just like that, if I do, God will punish me. I don't like to betray people once I have been trusted.

Patrick explained to me the reason why his brother Paul changed and started sending money to him instead of his other sister:

Before, Paul used to send to my sister, but he had a problem with my sister. Once he sent money to her which was to be given to my mum for her hospital bill and to pay the fees of my nieces and nephews. My sister took the money and ate it. She said her child was sick so she used the money to take her to the hospital with the expectation that her husband will reimburse her and she will then hand the money to my mum. But that never happened. Besides, I am not sure that her child was sick and even if that was the case, she cannot use all the

200.000 FCFA just for hospital for her child. I think she used it for her business, or if not, she probably gave it to her useless husband. Her husband owns a bar and has many customers that come to drink on a daily basis, but every day he is always crying for money. So when my brother realised that the money has not been given to my mum, he was very annoyed. From then, he stopped sending money to her and now he sends to me. But that is because he sees that I have changed, I am no longer 'in the world'²⁴³. At first I used to drink and smoke, and date so many girls, but last two years, the Holy Spirit captured me and now I am a changed person. If I was still in the world, my brother will never send me money. But now that I am a believer, he knows I can never eat his money. I can swear in the name of God that I have never taken out even 5 FCFA from the money that Paul sends for my personal use. Unless he asks me to do so. When you have the fear of the lord, you are a changed man; the fear of the lord is the beginning of trust. But when Miriam saw that Paul was now sending money to me and not to her, she was very annoyed. She came to my place and said I have gone and spoil her name to Paul just so that I should be the one receiving his money. She said she took care of all of us when we were little²⁴⁴, so if she has a problem and uses Paul's money, it shouldn't be a big problem such that Paul will stop talking to her. When she calls, Paul doesn't pick up the phone. For over one year now, they haven't spoken with each other and she is accusing me, my mum and my other siblings for conniving to blackmail her to Paul.

²⁴³ Pentecostal churches consider those who are not yet 'born-again', that is, those who haven't given their lives to Christ as those that are still 'living in the world'. When a person 'lives in the world', s/he drinks alcohol, smoke, listen and dance to non-gospel music, worship traditional gods, to name a few. When one is 'born-again', s/he becomes a new creature in Christ and his or her way of life also changes.

²⁴⁴ Miriam's statement that she took care of her siblings when they were little, and thus by implication should be the family manager further informs us of the role of traditional hierarchy that sometimes come into play in choosing the family manager. But more importantly, it should have been ideal and fair that having played an important role in taking care of them in the past, she should be the one in charge in the present. Nonetheless she lost that position when she became untrustworthy.

I called Paul and explained everything to him, and Paul told me no one decides to whom he sends his money. So I tried to make peace between Paul and my sister but Paul is still annoyed with what she did. Had it been my parents could read and write, he would have been sending the money to them directly. In this way, I wouldn't have problems with my sister. Last time when Paul sent money, I took my mum and we went to MoneyGram to go collect the money together. Immediately, I handed it over to her. She herself saw that I didn't take even 5 cents out of it. But my sister will never understand. I know the main reason why she is annoyed is because when Paul used to send her money, he will always tell her to take 10 or 15000FCFA for herself and use the rest as he instructed. She is annoyed that I have taken out food from her mouth. But she does not know that I don't have such benefits. Paul used to do that because she has children, and we know her husband is not someone reliable. But me, I am not married and I don't have any child, so I don't have that benefit. Paul can only ask me to take 2000FCFA or sometimes 5000FCFA for my transport but he never gives me extras as he did for my sister. And I have explained this to her but she doesn't believe me. She is still annoyed with me. There is nothing I can do. I only trust in my God.

These narratives are informative of the circumstances that surround remittance 'giving'. Unlike the Senegalese migrants who can order online from senboutique.com the goods they need for their families as documented in the work of Blanchard, (2014)²⁴⁵, there are no such online boutiques in Cameroon. In the absence of such a platform, Cameroonian migrants rely solely on family and friends to manage what needs to be done for them in the country. In doing so, they have to navigate through the apprehensions and risks that sometimes characterise money issues within kinship circuits in Cameroon. For example in the case of house construction, migrants

²⁴⁵ The website senboutique.com was created in 2006, an idea that came from Senegalese women entrepreneurs who migrated to the US. These women were looking for a way to put an end to the 'disappearance' of money that is remitted without breaking the family ties. The women decided to create an online store which they can directly order the goods they need for their families (Blanchard, 2014: 50, 51-53)

often rely on family and friends to carry out their project. Land and in particular house ownership is an important status symbol for migrants. A successful migrant is one who takes care of his/her family and has different types of investments but most importantly, owns a house²⁴⁶.

Yet for Cameroonian migrants, achieving this goal even when the money is available remains sometimes a nightmare. One needs to figure out who is to be trusted when remitting money back home. In other words, migrants need to be attentive when choosing their family manager. Although there exist a few real estate companies that sell houses and apartments mainly in the major big cities in Cameroon, many migrants prefer to buy land and build their own house(s). An informant noted that the materials that are used for the apartments and houses for sale are not durable, they are cheap 'wear-and-throw' Chinese materials so he prefers to build his own house; in this way he can chose the right durable materials. Yet they will have to figure out who they can trust to carry out such projects for them.

An informant explained that: "one will never find a person in Cameroon that you can trust 100 percent to handle your money. But if you find someone that do your work and steal a bit, then just be grateful". I have met many Cameroonians who take a one month leave from their work to go home and supervise their building projects after they were fed up with sending so much money but with little or no progress²⁴⁷. Once we were in a meeting and I was sitting in between Tara and Christopher. A discussion about bushfalling came up and Christopher explained that:

²⁴⁶ Diko and Tipple, (1992: 289) study on Ghanaian migrants attests that house ownership is an important status symbol that determines a successful migrant. In a society that offers little access to house ownership or the financial means of construction for many private individuals, these authors argue that remittances from migration offer migrants and their families the possibility to own a decent house in Ghana.

²⁴⁷ Carling, (2008: 1463-64) observes a similar dilemma for Cape Verdean migrants. With no accountability of how money sent for projects are being used, these migrants are conflicted on whether to keep sending money to their families or to take a vacation and go supervise their projects back home. However, making of any of such decisions is not without its own downside.

I am so annoyed with my brother. You cannot imagine what he has done to me. I had to stop my building project in the village because every day I was sending money but the work was not moving. I sent money for 100 bags of cement, estimating that it will finish the first floor of the house, but no, it didn't. I had to stop the work and go to Cameroon myself to check the project. Then finally I gave it to a friend to help control it for me, and so far I haven't had any problem with him for the time being. I mean, I cannot say he is a saint, that is to say I can't trust him 100 percent, but he is good. At least I can see progress and he keeps me informed of how the work is progressing. You see, if you give your money to a friend who eats 5 or 10 percent and put the rest 90 or 95 percent in your work, that is better than giving it to a brother who will do the reverse. After all, he will say, it is my brother's money. It is coming from Europe. If your brother or sister eats your money what can you do? Nothing, you will just take it that it is your own blood, it is your sibling. Unlike a stranger that you can use legal force to compel him to pay back²⁴⁸.

At this point, Tara got into the discussion and continued that, "there are some people who don't care about this brother/sister stuff. You eat their money, they will put you to jail whether you are a sibling or a friend. People back home sometimes take things for granted. But you know, there are people who are really lucky; they work with their brother(s) back home and he does everything that he is asked to do and does that very well and with no problems. I know one guy in Zurich who has built a very big hotel in Buea, and it was his brother and sister that controlled everything. And I know another guy whose friend is the one controlling all his affairs in Cameroon", Tara concluded. I added that, "it just varies from family to family", and Tara reiterates that, "if one has to carryout projects back home, you just need to 'tie heart'" (a pidgin word meaning to persevere).

²⁴⁸ On my way back from the meeting, one member with whom I was sitting in the tram gossiped that Christopher likes to show off with his investments in Cameroon. He wants everyone to know that he is constructing two villas and a duplex. Then he added that "when you listen to Christopher talks about his investments, it is just as if the person who does not have any of such investments is not in Europe... You might begin to see yourself as a failure".

Tara kept his plate on the floor as he completed his sentence. Then he opened his bottle of Guinness beer and took the first sip, and said: “poor people say Guinness is bitter²⁴⁹; they should live it for us”. At this juncture, the conversation switched into the different tastes of different beers in Cameroon. Tara and Christopher started arguing about which beer tastes best and other members joined the conversation

Two weeks later, I met Christopher in a tram and we started talking. I asked him how his building project was coming along but he responded that: “all these people are thieves. I left from frying pan directly into the fire (meaning I left from bad to worst). This other new man that I thought he will even be better, but no, he is even worse. It would be better to have dealt with the devil I know. He started off well, the work was progressing and he was keeping me informed on the work and how he was using the money. But recently, he has just changed. For the moment, I think I will just live the project on stand-by and go there from time to time to do it myself. But the problem is that money is not something that you can say you will be keeping like that. As you save it, problems are coming from left and right and in solving these problems, you see that the money is going. So my wife was suggesting hiring a contractor. I will see about that later, for now, I have had enough headaches”, he said. We both laughed as he rounded up his sentence and continued our discussion on the various strategies that families use to get money from migrants including lying that they are sick. Our discussion went on until we got to where I had to get off the bus.

In my discussions with migrants as well as with migrants’ families in Cameroon, I could see the tensions and conflicts that emanate in terms of who receives what is sent. Trust remains an issue and ‘born-again’ Christian family members boast that they are trustworthy since they have the fear of the lord. But even in the midst of all these conflicts, the practice of remittance giving remains an inescapable moral duty undertaken by Cameroonian migrants to their families and friends. Thus the question here is what account for these

²⁴⁹ This is a popular Cameroonian adage that loosely translates as: those who are poor and can’t afford always give excuses that a good or an item or service is not good/below standard/doesn’t taste well.

persistent flows amidst complaints of family pressure by migrants? The answer lies in a moral heart to do good to friends and neighbours and fulfilling familial duties that characterise kinship ties in Cameroon.

Primordial ties and the persistence of remittance ‘giving’

As my informant, Paul noted above at the beginning of this chapter, in order for the family in Cameroon to drink from the flow of remittances, he must open the tap from Switzerland. As a matter of fact, one can never say I have ‘overgiven’ (giving [more than] enough), one can only say that you will reduce, but you can never completely stop from giving, an informant noted. According to this line of thought, the practice of remittance ‘giving’ thus is a *natural*, uncontested, inescapable obligation which migrants have to respect. By virtue of being born and raised, children owe to their parents *a debt for the gift of life*. This subsection investigates the persistence of remittance giving to families, notably to parents even when the migrants are facing difficult legal and economic conditions e.g. being undocumented, not having a full-time job.

In examining the relationship between children and their parents, what comes to mind is the theme of generational ties. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde (1950) study on African kinship demonstrates the incessant relationship between parents, children, and grandchildren over time. These kinship relations based on descent, filiation, succession, and alliance entails rights, duties, and obligations which must be respected. In this line of thought, Goody, (1976) attests that senior members, in particular senior male members of a lineage and the community control both the productive and reproductive assets. As a matter of fact, the differentiation of spaces by gender and age division of labour led to a stable continuity of generational relations. Meillassoux, (1981: 18) broadens Goody, (1976) thesis on the division of labour and generational relations by pointing to the fact that kinship relations are imposed by birth and that they are lifelong, statutory and intangible. In this primordial ties, individuals carry out various duties in the production and reproduction of life stages. For

Meillassoux, (1981) relationships between generations are made of advances and restitutions.

In line with the above authors (Goody and Meillassoux), Warnier, (1993a) documents a similar case in Cameroon. He shows in his study that senior male members, in particular fathers possessed the goods that needed for the survival of the community. In this way, fathers were responsible to provide for their children. In Warnier's sense, this means the older generation provided food and seeds for the next one and should be reimbursed for that—"the gift of life".

With European colonisation of Cameroon, which resulted in increased monetisation of the local economy, sons began to migrate to the coast for various reasons e.g. to work and raised money for bride price payments²⁵⁰ and to provide for their families back in the village. Thus in this era, earnings from migration also served the purpose of taking care of some basic needs of aging parents back in the village²⁵¹.

The emotional ethics of care and to share could be said to be the main virtues that characterise intergenerational ties. In a sense, these are the main ingredients in the reciprocal relationship that defines intergenerational relations as argued by Alber et al, (2008: 6). In their anthropological study on *Generation and Connection in Africa*, these authors note that "reciprocity means a sense of mutual dependence expressed in give and take over time". However, they insist that this

²⁵⁰ Le Meur, (2008: 219, 221) also noted a similar pattern in Benin where migration in the 1950s was a pathway for capital accumulation by young men for bride wealth payment—"the monetary input from migration was a major factor in establishing matrimonial autonomy". As a matter of fact, migration was a significant determinant to young men's upward social status.

²⁵¹ European invasion to the hinterlands of Cameroon introduced biomedical care through the creation of health centres; thus villagers no longer relied solely on traditional medicine (Felman-Savelsberg, 1999: 135-174). But this also meant incurring costs to purchase prescribed medications. Most villagers could not afford and thus relied on the revenues from their sons who had migrated to the coast to work in the plantations. Sons coming to the village for visits also brought certain goods such as blankets, milk, tea, to list a few (personal communication with Mr. Mither who migrated to the coast in the 1940s). Elsewhere in other African countries, it has also been documented that sons became independent from their fathers through earnings from labour migration to the urban centres. In this regard the elderly became economically dependent on their children (Mair, 1969: 103).

mutual dependence does not entail direct exchange of equivalents between genealogical generations. In contemplating whether or not reciprocity was the right term to use, they finally make the case that reciprocity is the most preferred term because it captures both the acts of sharing and transmission of resources as well as mutual expression of care and regard. In their analysis, they maintain that kinship reciprocity involves the transfer of material and immaterial resources and that it is imbued with assumptions about morality (Alber et al, 2008)²⁵².

Alber and her colleagues noted that morality is ever present. They describe these moral principles that shape generational ties in Africa as an ‘intergenerational contract’ which they defined as “ the implicit expectation that parents will care for their children until they can care for themselves, and that children will support their parents when they can no longer support themselves”²⁵³. To these authors, an inevitable moral obligation characterizes children-parents ties and it is measured by life stages from being born to when children become adults (and perhaps, become migrants) Alber et al, (2008: 7).

Thus when children take care of their parents, they are in a sense reciprocating the care their parents offered them in their childhood. In a similar way, when migrants take care of their parents through remitting for various care needs such as housing, health, food, to name a few, they are giving back for the care received from their

²⁵² This custom of children respecting and looking after their parents is also enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981: 3-5). Articles 18 (1 and 2), 27 (1), and 29 (1) says that the family is the natural unit and basis of society. It is the custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community. Every individual shall have a duty towards his family and society and “to preserve the harmonious development of the family and to work for the cohesion and respect of the family; to respect his parents at all times, to maintain them in case of need”.

²⁵³ This argument resonates with Meillassoux, (1981) thesis that describes kinship, domestic reproduction and production in the contexts of social functions. Although the family reproduces labour power, it is not guided by capitalist rules. That is to say its internal regulations and its legal position in the economy are non-capitalist (pg.101-102). In Meillassoux’s sense, this means that parental work regarding raising of children, especially the tasks carried out by a mother is non-compatible with other economic activities. It is a social function in the sense of an intergenerational contract between parents and children. .

parents through their life stages. I am referring here to *claims of rights and claims of duties*; the former belonging to the family (e.g. parents claim that it is their right to be taken care of) and the latter belongs to the migrants (migrants are aware that it is their duty to take care of their families). Thus through remittances, migrants are only doing what they ought to be doing. In addition, to give to one's parents is a blessing as one of my informant's puts it:

"I am happy to send to my parents because giving to your parents be it money or other forms of gifts and assistance is a kind of blessing to me. I am not forced to give, but I know I have to give. It is my own way of saying thank you to my parents for all what they did and have been doing to me".

As pointed out above, giving to one's parents makes the giver eligible for a form of blessing and is regarded as a way of saying thank you. Thus, it is important to elaborate on some of the major ways which migrants say 'thank you' to their parents through remittances. In this discussion, I focused on three major forms of migrants 'appreciation' to their parents for the gift of life: building a house for them, setting up a business (source of income), and bring over a sibling abroad. As a matter of fact, these are also the measures for which successful migrants are defined. It is worth mentioning that these strategies of familial help are also beneficial for the migrant e.g. once the house is built, the money that s/he would have sent to his/her parents for house rent would be diverted for other family needs.

House construction

'Oh very much, Father,' Nnu Ego replied, looking up from the tobacco she was grinding on two pieces of stone for his pipe. 'When one grows old, one needs children to look after one. If you have no children, and your parents have gone, who can you call your own?' (Buchi Emecheta, 1979. *The Joys of Motherhood*, page 38).

Indeed, as noted above, ‘when one grows old, one needs children to look after one’. One of the ways in which migrants, especially undocumented migrants saved money for house construction projects is through njangi (tontines) in the country of residence. As described under my methodology chapter, it is in some of these njangi meetings that I met some of my informants. Even some documented migrants, prefer to save money in a njangi than to take a loan from the bank. The Cameroonians migrants interviewed for this study are very aware of their moral obligation towards their families, especially to their parents²⁵⁴ and until this is done, one can never relax²⁵⁵. George explained that:

“I have built a house for my parents, I have brought over my younger brother, I have two pieces of land in Cameroon, now I can relax”.

George has been living in Sweden for 8 years. He came as a student but later abandoned school and started doing some cleaning jobs. In the course of these years, George explained to me that he was able to build a one apartment house for his parents in Cameroon. The house consists of 4 bedrooms, one living room, two toilets, a kitchen and a garage. It is located in a sub-urban neighbourhood in the South West region of Cameroon. It is located

²⁵⁴ In her study on Ghanaian migrants, Mazzucato, (2008: 92-94) defines care for the elderly as including various needs for example housing, medical care, food, house chores as well as keeping the elderly company. In the case of Cameroon, this care also includes help with farm work. In her analysis, Mazzucato makes the case that, unlike in industrial societies where elderly care is impersonal and organised by the state through welfare provisions and pensions, care in the developing countries is personal and conducted by relatives. In the latter, elderly people live with members of the family.

²⁵⁵ Many Cameroonian migrants worried that by being born and raised in Europe, their children will not take care of them when they grow old. In many discussions with these migrants, many of them explained that they know that their children who are born and raised here in Europe will never do what they did and are doing to their parents due to the different cultural expectations. “I am sure by the time I am 80 years old or so, my children will just go and leave me in a home for the elderly... We can’t count on these children raised here in Europe, even if they have Cameroonian blood in them” an informant noted.

in a nearby neighbourhood where George's parents lived. As I discussed with George, he explained to me that it was not easy, but he had to do this because he couldn't continue to pay rents for his aged parents:

“At a certain age, if your parents are still renting, it is a disgrace to your family. It is shameful to be a bushfaller and your parents are still renting. You know how people gossip back home, neighbors will be laughing at them, saying their son or daughter is in bush and look at where they are staying... I just dedicated 4 years of my time here in Europe to concentrate on my family... Just the fact that your parents can live in peace and there is no landlord coming to knock on the door at the end of the month demanding for house rent is something that I feel so proud of. And my parents, they also appreciate me a lot for what I have done for them... Now I want to start concentrating on myself, I need to get married and look after my own family”.

Nonetheless this method of parental care through house construction is not without its own difficulties. While George achieved this easily, this was not so the case with Ateme.

Ateme has been living in Switzerland for 15 years. He comes from the North West region of Cameroon. Last four years, he bought a piece of land and built a huge, fenced one-storey building in Limbe in the South West region. He asked his parents to leave the mud-brick house where they lived in Bamenda (in the North West region) and stay in his modern house in Limbe. His parents were still in the old house when his dad passed on. After this, he again insisted a year later that the mud-brick house in which they grew up was no longer convenient for his mum. Neighbors were even gossiping that his mum could not stay in a modern house even though his son was abroad; she was still living in the same poor conditions as them without bushfallers. Ateme's mum, was hesitant to go to Limbe, so he sent some relatives who came and convinced her to leave. Ateme asked his mum to stay in the first floor while the ground floor was rented. The rent money would serve as his mum monthly allowance to purchase other household items she needed including money for her medication when need arose. Ateme organized for the daughter

of one of her mum's neighbors to come live with her. He took charge to pay the school fees of the girl and the girl in return kept her mum company and did household chores for her—cleaning, cooking, shopping, to name a few.

However, Ateeme's mum didn't like the house. First she complained that she couldn't use the modern flushing toilet in the house. When she went to the rest room, she was unable to urinate or excrete. For her, it felt like she was sitting on top of a pot (which is like a cooking pot). To solve this problem, Ateeme had to build an external pit latrine which was what her mum was used to. Two months later, his mum complained again that she couldn't stay in the house. The house was too big and it was fenced. She didn't like it. She wanted to go back to Bamenda and stay in her mud house. She missed her neighbors whom she had known for decades. Every day she was complaining. Ateeme told me that he was very annoyed, and later calmed down. Then he decided to rather renovate the mud house in Bamenda so that his mum could stay there. Ateeme told me that his plans was that in the coming years, he will demolished the mud house in Bamenda and construct a modern family house, it will be some sort of a resting home, for this was the neighbourhood where he and his five siblings grew up. But given that his mum refused to stay in Limbe, he changed the plans. He saved the house rents from the house in Limbe in the course of one year and used the money to renovate his mum's house in Bamenda which she now lives in.

Looking at these two cases, we can see that it is not just enough for migrants to carry out a house project, but the location of these buildings matter to the migrants' parents. In the case of George's parents, the house was built close to the neighbourhood where they lived. This means that they can still continue to interact with their neighbors and continue their daily activities such as going to the same market, the same church, still go to their farms. This was not the case with Ateeme's mum who was taken out from her usual neighbourhood and this had bad psychological effect on her.

In addition, the design of the houses needs to suit these aged people taste in terms of what they need and what they are used to. It must also be mentioned that the obligations of remittances impact

on migrants' decisions between employment and education in the host country and this tend to have implication on migrants integration. This came out clearly in the case of George who had to give up his studies in order to work and send money home.

Setting up a source of income

Besides house construction, another means through which migrants take care of their parents is through setting up a source of income. In the case of Ateме as described above, the house rents which his mum received served as a source of income. When his mum moved back to Bamenda, he assigned a friend based in Limbe to collect the rents from his house and send it to his mum in Bamenda. In the case of another informant Cynthia, it was better to set up a source of income for her family instead of frequent direct money transfers.

Cynthia explained to me that in order to better meet her mom's and other family members' needs, she decided to buy a taxi so that the daily earnings of the taxi will cover for immediate financial demand. In 2011, Cynthia bought a second-hand Toyota corolla car and sent it to Cameroon. She later sent 500.000 francs CFA for the purchase of all the required documents needed to run the car as a taxi. Depending on the city, the daily taxi income in Cameroon can range from 8000-15.000FCFA. In the South West region, the daily taxi income is between 8-10.000FCFA. Through the help of her cousin, Cynthia got a taxi driver. The daily income would be handed to her mother. The money would cover for any expenses that her mum had. Her mother joined a local tontine where she was saving part of the money. If there was any urgent issue in the family requiring financial intervention, Cynthia would instruct her mum on the amount to give and who to give to.

Cynthia also gave strict instructions that she should never be called for any financial matters to repair the car in case the car broke down. She explained to me that from 2011 up to 2014 when I interviewed her, she hasn't had any major complaint concerning car breakdown or mismanagement of the money. According to Cynthia, "this has really helped me a lot. It has saved me the headache of

always sending money all the time for this and that”. While talking with Cynthia over the phone in June 2015, she told me the profits from the taxi has helped her mum to set up a small provision store that sells basic household items needed by the people in the neighbourhood.

This latter approach of setting up a grocery store for parents/family have been used by many Cameroonian migrants that I interact with including my informant Celestine. He told me he gave his mum capital to open up a small store, while he bought a taxi for his dad. For Michael, he gave his mum capital to do petty trade. Michael’s mum buys items in a village market and sells them in the city. Michael explained to me that he did this so that his mum could reduce her farm work. All attempts at stopping his mum from going to the farm have failed so he thought that with this business; he will no longer have to send her money monthly, only from time to time. In addition, it would also help his mum reduce her farm work. In the case where a parent requires regular medical check-up, a migrant can make arrangements with a doctor in Cameroon, sometimes a specialist to take charge of the medical up keep. This doctor will be paid every month or some other periodic payments depending on the arrangements between the doctor and the migrant.

Bringing-over siblings

An informant noted that: “when you are alone, the burden is heavy, but if you are two or three here in bush, then the burden is lightened because you share responsibilities”. A common practice amongst Cameroonian migrants is to bring over a sibling abroad. I myself have been asked once by a cousin why I haven’t brought over at least none of, my direct siblings. My explanation that I was a student and thus not in position to do such a thing didn’t seem to convince him. In general, the first migrant tries to bring over a sibling. In the case of my informant George, he brought over his younger brother after he built a house for his mum. To do this, he paid the school fees for his younger brother who migrated to Sweden to pursue his master degree program. When his younger brother came,

George advised him to be smart to make sure that he too could bring over a sibling in the coming years. He explained that:

When my younger brother came, I sat him down. I told him you see, this is Europe. I have struggled to bring you over. Now you have to fend for yourself and make sure in the next five years or so, you too should bring over a sibling. From next year, know that you too will have to be taking care of problems back home. I have done my share... This is how I survived. I was a student and still did much for the family, now it is your turn. This first year is your year of mercy, as from next year, you shall also take charge to send money to mama and papa...

In the course of my research, I found out that some migrants who have siblings abroad, rotate parental care. That is to say, if in January migrant A sends allowance to parents back home, in February migrant B will be the one to send and so forth. In this way, the burden is not so much on one migrant²⁵⁶.

To conclude the above sections on various forms of parental/family care carried out by migrants, I would say that not all migrants are in a position to provide all the three major forms of care to their parents described above. Such is especially the case with undocumented migrants²⁵⁷ and unemployed migrants. Being undocumented or unemployed, some of these migrants cannot easily mobilize the required money that is needed for such projects e.g. building a house. They can only mobilize money for e.g. a petty business and/or send what they can when the need arises. Mazzucato, (2008: 101) described these as ‘occasional helpers’.

²⁵⁶ In a similar study, Mazzucato, (2008: 100) mentions that once the second migrant brought over by the first one have found a job and can set aside some money, the burden for parental care shift to this new migrant. From my own research, family responsibilities are not completely shifted to the second migrant, the first one somehow still takes part but not as much as before. The first migrant can *relax* as George rightly noted.

²⁵⁷ However, with the case of undocumented migrants, there can be exceptions. For example, in the case of Cynthia, she is undocumented but through her full time undeclared baby-sitting job, she was able to set up a source of income for her mum which also did help other family members.

Yet as I echoed above and feel worth reiterating, migrants also face some difficulties in the course of providing care (whatever form it takes) to their parents. This is because sometimes responsibilities for care tend to fall entirely on them. This can also be strenuous for migrants especially student migrants who have to multi-task between familial/ parental care, work, and school. The same applies to undocumented migrants who perhaps might be struggling to legalize their stay through whatever means they can and at the same time also caring for parents back home.

If we go by these challenges, can it therefore be said that migrants can relax after meeting all or if not the major parental care/needs? For George, the answer is yes. He has fulfilled his obligations, or better still his major obligations, so he can relax. But for Emelda, to relax has a broader meaning. She understands relaxation as synonymous to a situation where migrants after achieving the care needs mentioned above can decide to stop remitting and only concern with themselves. And for her, such a scenario is never possible. She insists that:

One can never *really* relax, I mean relax in the sense that one can stop remitting and concentrate only on yourself. You can relax by not sending much as before but to say you stop, no, that is not possible. You can reduce the amount, the number of people, and the frequency of remittances sent, but you can never stop, that's not possible... You can never say it is enough. You can only just create a business for them to be taking money from that business when they need, meaning that you will not be sending direct cash all the time. But to say you stop sending, that is not possible.

This means that even when one has built a house for his/her parents, provided a source of income and brought over a sibling or siblings, the migrant can still not stop remitting. Thus looking at the above discussions, familial/parental care in Cameroon is strongly shaped by the principle of intergenerational reciprocity—parents give birth to children, nurture and care for them until they are independent and they start taking care of their parents. This is made stronger due to the absence of formal welfare systems for the elderly.

Another aspect which came out in the above discussion is that one can never give enough to one's parents, the same holds true for migrants. Remittances to parents whether financial or non-financial can never be enough.

The migrant as an 'elder' (piggybank): the case of Paul

"When one falls bush, you automatically become important. You are like an elder (a notable) and people start to respect you including even those who are older than you. When there is any problem at home, they will consult you, your opinion counts... Those who despised you, starts searching for all means to connect with you" (Cameroonian migrant in Sweden).

In Cameroon, it is customary to respect older persons especially seniors who are old enough to be a parent. Within family settings, older siblings are respected by the younger ones and they tend to look after them and to help them financially and otherwise whenever there is a need. But such family norms can be thwarted when it comes to migration. Due to the social status associated to bush, a younger person who lives abroad could have the final say if there is any family conflict within the home than an elder sibling who lives in Cameroon. You will hear a statement such as "my brother or sister in bush has decided as such and we cannot change it". The migrant in this case is similar to an elder or a notable as described by Warnier, (1993b, 2009, 2012). In line with Warnier, the migrant (through his/her remittances) becomes a notable, (like a piggybank) possessing both power and status within his/her family and community. Within the traditional hierarchy, an elder or a notable is usually a man. He makes sure there is a smooth functioning of the community through the settling of familial, land, and other disputes. In relation to migration, both male and female migrants can become elders (piggybanks). I have used the case of Paul to illustrate this analogy of the migrant as an elder (a piggybank) in relation to remittances.

After his bachelor degree, Paul who is Bamileke worked as a volunteer in Cameroon in the Ministry of Health for five years. Later in 2007, he travelled to Switzerland through an internship he got with the UN. After his internship, Paul enrolled in a university in

Switzerland to further his studies and also to use it as means to stay. At the end of his studies, the migration office asked him to leave so he enter into a paper marriage with a French lady residing in Switzerland. While in Switzerland, he was communicating with his father. Three years later, that is in 2010, his father fell sick and as he got sicker, their communication became more frequent. Paul's father called him to come home, and just before Paul finalised his plans to go to Cameroon and see his dad, he told him not to come: "don't come, I will leave the news with my brother, they will tell you". A week later, Paul's father passed-on and Paul travelled to Cameroon for his burial. After the wake keeping and burial had taken place, it was announced that Paul would be made his father's successor, as the head of the family. This was the message his father left to Paul's uncle. In the photos that I saw during the succession ritual, Paul was seen dressed in a special traditional attire, sitting on a specially carved wooden stool that used to belong to his father. In another picture, Paul was inside a specially-reserved room with only men, most of them elderly men from his father's lineage. At the end of the ceremony in which certain rites were performed transforming Paul from a sibling to a 'father', Paul was then officially let out by the male group. From that moment, Paul was no longer Paul, but has become Pa Nchacheu (his deceased father).

I asked Paul whether he knew he would be made the successor, but he said he didn't know. It was only when his dad passed-on that he realised that the message the dad had left was that he was to be made his successor. But Paul recounted that:

My father always used to tell me to take care of the family, he was always saying that all the time but I didn't know that he meant I will be the successor.

I also met Paul's brother and his wife while in Cameroon and while chatting with Paul's brother wife in the kitchen, she told me that being the head of the family is not just a simple task, it is a huge responsibility amongst the Bamileke. This is what she said:

For us the Bamileke, it is not just anyone who is chosen as head of the family, and once chosen, it entails huge responsibilities. You are not just an ordinary person, even if it is a young boy like Michel that you see here (pointing to her son who was sitting next to her), once he has been crowned a successor, he becomes the family head and command the respect of all others. Don't you hear my children calling Paul grand père, he is now the grand père, not just tonton (a francophone slang for uncle). Paul is even lucky that papa was not inside the palace affairs ("papa n'était pas dans les chose de la chefferie"), that one is even more complicated. If you are the successor for a person who was a palace notable, you are even more indebted. There are so many things you have to do and so many rituals to be performed and people to look after. But we are just lucky that it is not the case with Paul.

Paul himself is very aware of the responsibilities that have befallen him as the family head—the elder. In our numerous conversations, Paul always reminded me: "you know I am the head of my family, and this is not a joking matter". In his status as the family head, it will be important for Paul to get married and have children. His mother is already so worried that Paul does not yet have children. Paul's mum told me over our discussion in Cameroon that: "he is my only child who does not yet have children, and that really worries me, it worries me so much especially because he is the head of the family". But what is also important is not just having children, but it will be important that Paul has a son in order to continue with the lineage. Paul explained to me that when he is sending money to his family, he is not just sending as a sibling but as the head of the family. That is why he also have to send to his brothers' wives, who are now his 'wives' (in a symbolic sense). This explains why when one of Paul brother's wife gave birth, Paul sent her money to buy things for the baby. Paul's brother and his wife live in the United States. In an email that was sent in appreciation, Paul's brother wife wrote: "merci grand père". In a related email, Paul's elder brother appreciated Paul for doing a great job in taking care of the family: "tu es vraiment un chef de famille". Although she is married, Paul had to send money to her sister in Canada when she was sick; in Paul's

words: “they are all my responsibility. So I am not thinking whether they are married or not, I am doing this as the head of the family”.

Hence in his role as the family head, Paul sees the family as a whole unlike his other siblings, so he sends to everyone. Usually in Cameroon, when a girl gets married, her husband provides for her; her agnatic family stops providing for her. The educational, health, and other needs are the sole responsibility of the husband. But when one is the family head and hence considered as an elder, s/he doesn't think in this way. This is especially the case when he is in bush. As a family head, Paul sees her sister as his responsibility and her marital status and geographical location does not prevent him from sending her money.

In the sense of Warnier, (1993a, 2012), Paul would be considered as the family piggybank²⁵⁸, and by implication, the obligation to remit is even more. This explains why, even though his sister is in Canada, married, study, and works part time, Paul had to send her money when she fell sick. In other words, his moral obligation to remit is embedded in his cultural duties as the family head²⁵⁹.

Hence although there is a strong feeling of solidarity which obliges sharing amongst kin in the Grassfield and in particular the Bamileke as documented in Warnier, (1993b: 139-150), the obligation to share is even stronger for the family head, and this becomes intense in relation to his/her geographical location— at home or abroad. Thus if some migrants can be considered as family piggybanks, it is obvious that families would not want anything or anyone to interrupt these flows. To ensure this, they tend to

²⁵⁸ Warnier (1993a: 305, 2012: 6-7) writes that amongst the Grassfielders, the family head (usually a man) is a vital piggybank for the whole family. He is a container, in him can be found the plenitude of life through saliva, semen, and blood, received from the origins in a whole line of ancestors. However, possessing these vital substances does not automatically make a man a piggybank, he only becomes a piggybank when co-opted as a ‘father’ into a descent group. Upon the death of a man, one of his sons, chosen by the father in his life-time takes over the name, his title, his paraphernalia, his wives (except his mother) and all the rights in person and things held by his father (Warnier, 1993a: 305).

²⁵⁹ Being a hierarchical society, the duties of a family head in the Grassfield are more stringent compared to other ethnic groups in Cameroon e.g. the Coastal and the Forest peoples who are known to be more lax (Warnier 1993b, Ardener, 1996).

scrutinised who their bushfaller sons marry. Because it is expected that husbands take care of their wives financially and otherwise, families don't want their bushfaller sons to marry just any kind of woman from Cameroon. Certainly, not one who would only be interested to eat their son's money or to use him to fall bush. So they tend to choose wives for their sons as described below.

“This girl wanted to turn my son into her money-sucking machine”: Families at home choosing wives for their migrants

“...With all my years of suffering, now is my time to reap what I have worked for, and this girl just wanted to turn my son into her money-sucking machine. But my God is alive and watching” (remark made by a mother in Cameroon).

This section describes how families back home chose, or try to orient their choice of spouses for their migrant sons as a strategy to control the remittances from them. Families do not want someone that will be interested only to use their son to fall bush or in his money because that would obviously have implications on the amount and frequency of the remittances flowing from their son to them. Because remittances are returns on investment, families want to be in control including in deciding who benefits from their son's remittances in terms of who he chooses as a wife from home. I illustrate this with the case of Solo.

Solo has finished his degree program from the University and got a job with a cooperative credit union in Bamenda. During this time, he met Sarah and they started dating. Two years later, Solo won the America DV lottery and left for the US. Solo and Sarah kept in touch over the phone, emails, and Solo often send money to Sarah for her up-keep. While in the US, Solo would often flaunts Sarah's pictures on his Facebook wall, inviting many positive comments from his friends. After three years in the US, Solo and Sarah decided to get married. Everything was planned, and Solo told me he was going to Cameroon for his wedding. “Is it the girl I see on your Facebook”? I asked. “Yes”, Solo replied; then he said “if not her who else?” When Solo said he was going to get married, I assumed he had already informed his family, but it wasn't the case. It turned out that Solo and

Sarah made their arrangements privately. According to the arrangements, Solo will come to Buea to visit his family, stayed there for two nights and join Sarah in Bamenda. From there, they will have a civil wedding before Solo returns to Buea to inform his family so that they can go for the traditional wedding²⁶⁰.

Two days before Solo's departure, he called his family to inform them he was coming. His mother was surprised with such a short notice. "You should have informed us before so that we prepare, but no worries. We are waiting for you", she said. Solo arrived in Buea, and the next day he said he will be going to Bamenda. "What for"? The mum asked. At this point, Solo couldn't hold the truth any longer, and he said to his mum that he will be travelling to Bamenda to get married. His mum fell on the ground, and shouted: "marry who"? And Solo told her of the girl he intends to marry. Sarah is not from the same ethnic group as Solo, she is Bamileke while Solo is from Nkwen. "It is over my dead body that you will marry that girl", Solo's mother warned; "how can you just come-up and say you want to marry a girl that we have not even met", she added. Solo's father was in support of the idea while Solo's mum, siblings, and other relatives were strictly against. Solo's mum said that his son has been bewitched, so she refused that Solo would travel to Bamenda. She instead took Solo to go and meet a pastor so that he can pray and break the charm bondage. Solo stayed for two days with the pastor and his mum, they fasted and prayed. And when they came home, Solo started to wonder what has brought him to Cameroon. He asked his mum: "what did I come to do in Cameroon"? Upon hearing this, his mum confirmed that Solo has been healed. She shouted: "Lord I thank you" (lifting her hands up to the sky). Solo's trip to Bamenda was cancelled. Instead, Solo's sisters now were responsible to find a wife for Solo. Through friends and friends of cousins, Solo was finally introduced to Ateh who comes from the same ethnic group as Solo. Ateh travelled to Buea to meet Solo before his departure back

²⁶⁰ Usually in Cameroon, the traditional wedding is done before a civil wedding. According to the Cameroon 1981 Civil Status registration Ordinance, the civil status registrar (the mayor) cannot celebrate a marriage which the families of the bride and the groom haven't approved or do not approve.

to the US. A year later, Solo travelled to Cameroon and married Ateh (he did both the traditional and the civil wedding).

When Solo returned after his failed wedding to Sarah, we spoke and I asked him how the wedding did go. He responded: “Chris, I almost got myself into a deep shit had it not been for divine intervention” and he went further to explain to me the entire story but not with much detail. Even before I went home, Solo’s sister had explained to me over the phone what had happened. So while in Cameroon, I visited Solo’s family and his mum introduced Ateh to me saying: “this is your brother’s wife” as Ateh walked over to greet me²⁶¹. When Ateh went to the kitchen to prepare food, Solo’s mum began narrating the story. As she began, she said, “Chris I tell you that if not of me, you would have heard that your brother would have enter a devil’s kingdom to that so-called girl that he wanted to marry. It was the charm that was working on him, that is why he kept the marriage secret until he came home. If it was something clear and genuine, we would have known about it, he would have informed us ever since, or at least one of his sisters. But no one in the family knows the girl, just to tell you that none of these was natural, it was that her witchcraft that was at work”, she said. After narrating the story as described above, she went further to tell me: “but I thank God for Ateh, she is a good wife. She is the one that has been helping me here at home. Very soon she will leave to join Solo over there and I will have to look for someone else. I tell you that, that Bamileke girl used charm on my son just so that he can take her over to America, but God didn’t accept”. At the end of February 2016, Ateh finally got her visa and joined Solo in the US.

The example of Solo is just one of many cases which I have seen and heard. It exemplifies the key issues that are embedded within the discourses on marriage in relation to migration and remittances in the context of departure. Here, a major theme emerges. The conflict between mothers and would-be daughters-in-law shows parental involvement in the choice of spouses for their sons, especially when the son is bushfaller.

²⁶¹ Solo and I grew up together and so we are like families to each other.

Solo's mum was very vindictive because according to her, the Bamileke girl Solo was dating didn't have genuine intentions. She only wanted to use her son as way to fall bush. Because the girl was considered to be a 'money-sucker', Solo's family sensed a potential threat to the flow of remittances. As his mum noted, she had suffered for her son and it was the time to reap the fruit of her labour. She did not want any woman who would turn her son against her.

This case illustrates mainly family's strategies to stay in control of remittances. To do so, they oblige migrant sons to marry within the same ethnic group and possibly within the circle of people they know in order to be sure not to be reaped off their investment. They often succeed to do so if the girl is in Cameroon, but if she is abroad, the family would not perceive her as using their son to fall bush. Nonetheless, they would still wish a girl from the same ethnic group or region. I will take here the case of my friend Caroline. She is Anglophone, her ethnic group is Bakweri. She and her fiancé Teo who is Bamoun live in Germany. Caroline travelled to Cameroon in December 2013 for her mum's memorial service. After the occasion, she visited Teo's family in Bafoussam. Teo had informed his family that his fiancée will be coming. As they sat down to eat, one of Teo's aunts commented in French that: "...I don't understand why Teo didn't marry a Bamoun girl, and I heard there are many of them over there in Germany" (she said it discretely but she thought Caroline did not understand French). When Caroline returned to Germany, she told me: "Chris, if I was in Cameroon and Teo was coming to marry me, the family would have refused. They couldn't refuse because we are both here (meaning in Germany). They would have preferred their son to spend money to bring over another Bamoun girl and not an Anglophone. What am I even getting from Teo, nothing..."

Thus, it is evident that ethnicity is not the only factor that puts a strain on transnational marriages. As we have seen, the residence of the girl (whether she is in Cameroon or abroad) is also important. From my observations, parents in Cameroon are mostly concerned about girls who will travel abroad and 'eat' their son's money. The potential wife in Cameroon can still come from the same ethnic group as the bushfaller son, but if parents judge that such a girl is an 'opportunist', they might put pressure on their son not to marry her.

I know of cases where bushfallers have married women from Cameroon and invested in them including bringing them over. When the girls arrived, some of them divorced immediately, some stayed a few years and get their residence and then divorced. Thus when families in Cameroon tend to be stringent regarding who their son marries from Cameroon, it is also to avoid such problems. But if the girl is already a bushfaller, the situation is different.

In other cases, migrants' men date girls in Europe but do not marry them, instead they marry the wives that their parents have arranged for them in Cameroon. Sometimes this is due to parental pressure from Cameroon as shown above. Morais, (2007) study on Cameroonian migrants in Italy demonstrates similar practices. Yet, Cameroonian and by extension Africa male migrants often complained that it is very difficult for African girls to accept being in a relationship with them. They prefer to be with white men, or with the men who have already "arrived"; that is, men 'who have jobs and the legal papers in the various countries where they live as described in chapter 7.

Migrants and their remittance patterns: frequent flows and 'occasional help'

Cameroonian migrants are not a homogenous group; they are differentiated on the basis of gender, legal status (documented and undocumented), length of stay in countries of residence, marital status, employment status and type of employment, to cite a few variables and all these have an impact on their remittance patterns. While some migrants might tend to remit every month, others remit according to the various activities taking place within the year e.g. they remit in December for Christmas celebrations, in March where students are starting their second term school holidays, and in September when schools resume. In between these periods, these migrants also do remit if an emergency comes up requiring financial and any other form of material assistance.

The amount remitted also differs depending on the number of persons in need and depending on the nature of a problem. Instead of remitting every month, some migrants preferred to provide

alternative sources of income to their families as documented above in this chapter. Below is a table of the remittance patterns of my key informants:

Table 2. Remittance profile of main informants

Migrant	Remittance pattern
Cynthia (f)	Occasional (she provided a daily source of income to her family through a taxi).
Matilda (f)	Regular (monthly).
Emelda (f)	Regular (monthly).
Celestine (m)	Occasional (he provided a daily source of income to his family through a taxi).
Paul (m)	Regular (every two months).

Cynthia bought a taxi so that the daily output of the taxi would serve as a substitute for frequent remittance flows, and the same applies to Celestine. However, both Cynthia and Celestine still send home money to pay school fees, or when someone is sick, or when someone dies. Cynthia sends money in September and March when school resumes and in December. She also sends other goods to her family each time she finds someone going home. Before buying the taxi, Celestine had renovated his parents’ house. Matilda sends money every month to cover for the up-keep of her two children. Emelda sends money every month to her younger sister who is studying in the US. She also sends to her family in Cameroon as well. Sometimes, she will send money to cover for two months to avoid sending charges. Paul sends money every two months to cover for his mum’s hospital bills and other needs and sometimes to help his unemployed elder brother in Cameroon with the up-keep of his six children. There are times when he sends every month depending on the problems.

To avoid paying for sending charges, these migrants would give their money to friends going to Cameroon. The latter puts the money into his/her Swiss bank account and withdraws the money from an

ATM machine in Cameroon and give it to the person instructed to receive it. I did this for my informants when I went home in December 2014. From my experience, the charges paid for withdrawing the money from an ATM in Cameroon is 4-5 times less compared to sending the money via money transfer agencies. For example Money&Com charges 5CHF to send 100CHF to Cameroon. MoneyGram charges 7CHF to send the same 100CHF. But it will cost 450FCFA (about 1CHF) to withdraw the same 100CHF from an ATM in Cameroon.

It is also worth mentioning that migrants do not only remit to their families (nuclear and extended including in-laws), they also remit to neighbors and friends. While the flow of remittances is consider an economic and moral duty for migrants towards their families, I have observed that the way migrants represent themselves offline (when they go home for visit), but also online (on social media like Facebook) triggers demands for remittances. In such circumstances, the demands might come both from close and distant relatives and even non-relatives, sometimes from people who barely know the migrant. Although sending to such people will not be frequent as sending to immediate and other close extended family, it is nonetheless relevant to pay attention to this form of [occasional] transfers, what I would call ‘occasional help’; inspired by Mazzucato, (2008: 101) thesis on ‘occasional helpers’.

Although Cynthia and Celestine do not remit monthly or once in two months as the other migrants, they nonetheless still remit for other purposes. Although they do so occasionally as described above, they do not belong to my definition of ‘occasional help’. Their transfers will be consider as remittances because these are not just some random financial help sent to friends and/or other relatives who came seeking for help. Also, it is important to mention that even the migrants who are frequent remitters answer to ‘occasional help’ demands when confronted. For instance Matilda told me she once helped to pay the school fees of one of her classmates in Cameroon whose father died and there was no one to help her. This classmate of hers doesn’t have her phone number nor email address because they were not close to each other, as Matilda explained to me. But

they were friends on Facebook so she sent her a message via Facebook.

Like Matilda, I too have provided ‘occasional help’. For instance, once I also did upload a photo on Facebook. Although my intention was not to show that I am well-off, this was unfortunately how one of my family-friend-cousins read it. When she saw the photo, she commented that I was looking good and a few days later I received a message from her saying:

“Hi sis, hope you are doing fine. Please I need your help. I am really down and need to solve some problems, plus I want to do my ID card. It expired last week and I don’t want to be caught [*sic*] on the road. I beg if you can send me something, I will be grateful. May God continue to bless you. Thanks”.

I read the message and didn’t call back immediately but called a few days later and explained to her that I didn’t have money at that present moment, but that I will send it to her later when I can. She jokingly responded that the way I was shining on the picture didn’t reflect the fact that I was broke. Yet, it seems that to have made the promise to send money meant I indebted myself. She just kept beeping my phone all the time until one day I called her and told her that if she kept beeping, I would not send any money. “No, it is just to greet you”, she said. “I don’t want that kind of beeping-greeting”, I shouted. Then I said, “If you don’t have credit to call me, it is better you don’t beep me”. A week later, I finally sent 30,000FCFA (about 60CHF). I didn’t hear any beep, or acknowledgment of receipt. After a week, I called to check if she had received the money and she said “yes I got it thank you”, leaving me with even greater anger for her not having acknowledged receipt. Although I regretted to have posted the photo, the problem was not really the photo. Rather, it was the fact that the photo and other photos remind families at home (mostly the young people who are always connected on Facebook) of which network they belong to, and as a consequence who they can ask for help. Nonetheless, even without Facebook, such ‘occasional help’ will still continue to exist. People back home will always find ways to ‘beg’ for money and other material assistance from their

friends and family abroad; after all, for them, being in bush is synonymous to being financially viable. It is this notion of bush equals financial capability that migrants sometimes remind their families that they don't harvest money from a tree, that they are not money-making machines.

Migrants as money-making machines?

Nchuding's younger brother beeped him from Cameroon one Thursday evening when he just went back from work. "What could be the problem given that it was just the week before that he had sent money (Nchuding asked himself). Nchuding and I had a rendezvous for an interview the following week. But on his way home from work, he called me to find out if I was home and if I had prepared something that he could stop by and eat before returning to his house. I told him I haven't cooked but I had some leftovers that I could quickly heat up when he arrived. As we sat in the kitchen and was about to eat, there was a very brief ring of his phone. He took out the phone from his pocket and saw that it was his younger brother from Cameroon. He called back and I sensed it was a problem related to money. Immediately Nchuding shouted: "Today it is money for this, tomorrow it is money for that. Money, money all the time. I am not a money-making machine. I can only do that which I can, I don't make money, and I don't go and harvest money from a tree..." Nchuding hung up the phone and washed his hands to eat the garri and okro soup that I had prepared for him. As he washed his hands he said, "This people in Cameroon will not make one to go and steal to send to them. Only last week I sent money home, now he is calling me to ask for more money, saying that the money I had asked my mum to give him was not enough". I told him to calm down, saying, "my brother, you know how people think back home about life and money in bush". Then I joked, "Please swallow your garri". We both laughed as we ate.

Nchuding's outburst that he is not a money-making machine and the utterances of the other interlocutors quoted earlier demonstrate that migrants are sometimes under pressure to remit. Within this pressure to remit, there are those migrants who are good-hearted and

invest in their families and those who have the means but for some reasons (e.g. betrayal of trust from a receiver) do not invest in their families as they ought to. The migrants in this latter category are often described as wicked. They are considered as selfish and only interested to buy big cars to come show-off in Cameroon while not doing the right thing for their families.

Dymian posted a comment on his Facebook wall condemning migrants who only come home to show-off. He wrote that:

... Nobody is against travelling to look for greener pastures, driving in big cars, having their bodies tattooed, or indulging themselves in an extravagant hand-to-mouth life. But I am better placed to make the judgment because I am at home... Empty vessels are said to make loud noise and this second category of bushfallers can be assimilated to have-you-noticed-my-presence kind of people. When you want to imitate, choose the positive aspect of something... Americans who use super expensive cars live in mansions and have good roads. Why buy a low two-seater expensive car when all of us hail from large families and roads to our villages are not tarred. Why even do so when your parents are still living in tattered plank (houses made of wood) houses? I am only saying out loud what others murmured. If you were following the wrong track, it is time for you to come back to reality. Invest, my brothers and sisters, invest. Relations back home are quite dependent on some of you abroad; do not disappoint them (Dymian comment on Facebook, 24 July 2013)

While there were many who supported Dymian's ideas, there were others who suggested that families back home sometimes think of migrants as ATM machines where they can withdraw money any time they are in need. Nangia, in his response to Dymian, asserted that:

We do not want to misunderstand you but we of the diasporas will also be grateful if those who murmur do not regard their siblings abroad as slaves because of money... Even the so called educated back home regard their siblings abroad like banks. I agree that many in the Diaspora give false images when they go for visit back home; but at the

same time most of these hard working Cameroonians get frustrated with so many demands and they start to behave funny... (Nangia comment on Facebook, August 5 2013).

An example of a migrant “behaving funny” as quoted in the statement above is when s/he changes his/her telephone numbers as a way to avoid excessive calls for remittances from back home or give strict instructions for his/her telephone number not to be given out without permission or change from a frequent remitter to ‘occasional helper’ without providing any alternative source of income to his/her family back home.

Nonetheless, remittances are rooted in familial obligations and within these obligations, migrants can never permanently stop remitting. Rather, as another informant noted, giving to one’s family is a form of blessing. This therefore means that once migrants start to remit, they can never stop. After all, that is why they migrated in the first place. Migrants can however, reduce the frequency of flows and/or provide an alternative source of income for his/her family at home. Even though the problems from families back at home are numerous, it is always consider a migrant’s duty to care for his/her families as an informant noted:

Some of us we are just here to work for our families, by the end of the month when your salary is in your account, you are already thinking of who and how many people needs help for that month. But for me, when I look at my family background, even though I feel sad because I am the only one in bush, I am still happy that at least I am in a position that I can be able to help. So for that, I thank God. We are here complaining that people are asking for money, complaining about family problems, if God didn’t bless us that we should be here in bush what will you do? It is even more frustrating when the problems come and you are in a position that you can’t help. Imagine that you were in Cameroon and having to manage all these problems, what will you do? So for me, even though I complain, but I can’t act otherwise. I have to think about my family’s wellbeing, I mean that is why they sent me to Europe in the first place. To help myself and the family...

I have also shown that the amount remitted differs for migrants depending on the economic conditions in the country of destination as well as legality, marital status, number of siblings, occupation, to cite a few. The moral economy perspective to remittances broadens conventional remittance studies that demonstrate that when economic conditions in the host countries become difficult, migrants can stop remitting (Rodriguez 2011: 53). Rather, the moral economy model insists that migrants will continue to remit amidst economic downturns in the countries of destination. In this perspective, the motivation to remit is not only economic but also socio-cultural. This means that the remittance behaviour patterns of migrants are given a moral value and migrants continue to operate within a system of symbolic transactions.

“We don’t eat degrees”: the figure of a successful migrant

In Cameroon, a successful Mbengis is one who takes care of his/her family, someone who hasn’t forgotten his/her family in terms of material and financial care. For families and the wider community, a successful mbengis is someone who has money such that when s/he visits home, s/he comes big. To come home big means that mbengis should be in possession of material and financial resources when they come home. Whether one is a student and works part time or a full time worker, is not the family’s concern. As long as remittances flow, that is what really matters. Take for example the case of my informant George that I mentioned earlier. He had to stop school and look for a job which allowed him to remit back home. Even more important was the fact that by working and paying taxes in Sweden, George will become eligible to apply for Swedish residency after a number of years. With a Swedish residency, George will have more job opportunities and thereby increasing his remittance patterns and making him even more successful. Although studies are important, taking care of families too is also important, if not even more important.

A friend of mine felt so apathetic when another Cameroonian lady indirectly mocked her for doing the same cleaning job as her even though my friend had a master degree. In her direct words she

said: “this Europe is funny, even those who have master degrees do the same cleaning jobs like us, at the end of the day, what is the point?”. Then she went further to tell my friend the number of hours she works in her different jobs and the various investments she has in Cameroon. For her, it is not education that makes a migrant successful, but what s/he possesses materially and financially.

When I visited migrants’ families in Cameroon, they explained to me what their migrant was doing for them, whether s/he was paying for school fees for other siblings, or engaged in house construction or renovation, or providing alternative sources of daily income for the family. For instance in the case of my informant Celestine, his mum showed me the work that he has done. He has renovated his parents’ house and provided a source of income for the family through a taxi he bought for his dad and pays school fees for younger siblings. Although Celestine was undocumented and had to stop school to work, these issues were irrelevant to the family. At the end of the day, Celestine was appreciated for his hard work in relation to what he did for the family. The fact that he stopped his education was of no importance to the family. Hence, sometimes to achieve family’s success, migrants have to put their own personal development on hold.

Although I am paying the school fees for some immediate and external relatives as well as being responsible for my parent’s hospital bills, my ability to fully commit myself to taking care of the family is hindered by the fact that I am still a student. A fact which disappoints some of my relatives. For example an aunt had asked me why I couldn’t come home with a car; as a bushfaller, I was not supposed to be taking taxis up and down like non bushfallers. She told me: “when coming home next time, please come with a good car to come and ‘cruise’ (as in ride) inside. All this dust and sun here is not for you”, she noted. My aunt doesn’t seem to understand the fact that I am a student hence cannot afford the type of life some bushfallers live when they visit home. Yet, her statement needs to be understood in the context where other Cameroonian students abroad visit home with cars. Therefore my excuse is irrelevant. For her, this means that I have failed to meet up with the social expectation of ‘coming home big’ which is expected of [successful] mbengis.

Although I made it clear to families and friends in Cameroon that I am still a student and I don't have money, I still keep receiving demands from families and friends back home. Being in bush, I am expected to be able to assist financially and otherwise as other bushfallers do, people need money and they are not interested in migrants giving excuses that they are students and so they don't have the time to work or to work full time. This is why many migrants dropped out from school to work and remit back home.

In another situation, one of my extended cousins was annoyed with me for staying in Europe for six years and all I can talk about were educational achievements. He had asked me for money to start up a business. I explained to him that for the moment I couldn't afford any considerable amount. Researching and writing a PhD thesis is quite tough and I intend to finish it before I can engage in any meaningful fulltime employment that would allow me to raise the 500.000FCFA that he had requested. My explanation displeased him and he said:

Your friends have done so much for their families; they have brought over their siblings. I know one girl who went to Germany and after three years she brought-over two of her siblings. But you are here only talking about school, are you the one who discovered book? Every time school, school, PhD, PhD, what for? We don't eat degrees. When will that your school end so that you can start saying something better?"²⁶²

I smiled and said it will be over very soon. "I can't wait", he continued, then he added that: "at least even start a business, I hear

²⁶² A friend of mine from Zambia shared a similar experience when he went home to visit his family. He is married to a German lady and they have two kids, he is doing his PhD in Germany and went home for fieldwork with his German wife and kids. He went out for drinks with his friends and in their conversations, his friends were very dissatisfied with him. They said: "man, what are you doing? You have been in Germany for all these years and you cannot even send or bring us something substantial, you only come here with half-casts (metis children), what are we doing with half-casts. Cars are very cheap in Germany, we are not asking for new cars, just second-hand. You just come here with nothing but coloured kids".

that people go around and pick things and send to Cameroon, you can do something like that. All these old computers and electronics, you can pick them and ship them, including second-hand cars, even if the cars are so worn-out, we will fix them here in Cameroon. Next time, please try to come with a small Rav 4 car, not the way you came now”, he concluded. My cousin is not only dissatisfied that I couldn’t give him the money he asked for, but in his mind, as with many Cameroonians at home (and even abroad), I need to prove my success beyond academic achievements. If I was not a student, in particular a PhD student, I would have been working and investing more in the care for the families.

Once we were in a meeting and one meeting member was very disappointed when she realised I was still a student and that I didn’t work for the UN as she thought. She said: « ...Tu es toujours à l’école à quel âge ? Dis-donc arrête ça et trouve un boulot pour nourrir ta famille. Les gens au Cameroun ont besoin l’argent. Ils ont besoin de notre soutien. Vous les femmes des longs crayons²⁶³. Ici en Suisse ça n’est pas l’éducation qui compte, c’est l’argent »²⁶⁴.

Another lady chipped in and said: “ça n’est pas qu’en Suisse, c’est partout du monde. Ca c’est la vérité »²⁶⁵. I replied that I still have time; at 31, I am not too old, and even if I finish at the age of 33, it doesn’t put me out of the job market. Although I felt offended, it is however true that what people in Cameroon need is money, not degrees. We don’t eat degrees as my cousin rightly pointed out. Having degrees doesn’t make you a successful bushfaller. It is more about what you have achieved materially and financially back home. The present socio-economic climate in Cameroon has no space for the celebration of academic excellence. Material achievements

²⁶³ In Francophone Cameroon, people that are described as “les long crayons” are intellectuals. But it can also have derogatory meaning in that while others are becoming financially viable, others have nothing but academic achievements to show which is considered not to be very valuable, it doesn’t put food on the table.

²⁶⁴ English translation: you are still in school at what age? Please stop that and look for a job to take care of your family. People in Cameroon need money, they need our support. You women of long pencils/pens. Here in Switzerland it is not education that matters, it is money.

²⁶⁵ English translation: It is not only in Switzerland, it is all over the world. That is the truth.

irrespective of the means to get such achievements are much more appreciated.

Gone are the days where the “been tos” would be celebrated when they returned home with their western degrees, feeling proud, confident and ready to take up top executive posts created by the departure of the colonial masters. Today, such opportunities have disappeared. Thus if educational achievements were all what the “been tos” had to show, the bushfalling phenomenon today has placed educational achievements far behind material and family success. As a matter of fact, educational achievement is personal; in material terms, it benefits only the migrant through the knowledge gained and not his/her kindred. Thus the [educational] achievements of a migrant must meet familial material and financial expectations of prosperity to be [well] respected and be consider successful within his/her family and social networks.

At this juncture, let me finalize this chapter by examining how migration successes and failures are understood and interpreted in Cameroon for this would provide insights on the high migration aspirations in Cameroon and continuous migration attempts even for deportees.

Understanding migration successes and failures: the social capital of migration

For many families in Cameroon, there is pride and status in having a sibling, or relative abroad even if s/he is undocumented. After all, being undocumented does not stop migrants from remitting. In some cases, it only affects the amount and frequency but it does not halt the flow. In addition, the undocumented status will be unknown to the wider community in Cameroon. People back home will only know that the son or daughter of Mr. XY is abroad. For example my cousin Lumsi, lived undocumented in Switzerland for close to seven years before voluntarily returning to Cameroon to join her husband who fell sick. During this time, she bought a taxi for one of her brothers, built a two apartment house, completed her mum’s house, and on several occasions sent cars to her husband to be sold. Her mum was respected by her neighbours. Because her

daughter was in bush, it was assumed that she could never lack anything. Once she complained that: “in this neighbourhood, I can no longer be in need and asks someone to lend me money. If I do, people will gossip and insult me for going about borrowing money where as my daughter is in bush, as if having a child oversea means one can never lack anything”. On several occasions, (before I went abroad), my mum said she could never compare with her sister (Lumsi’s mum) because her daughter was in bush— “your aunt is making all those things because Lumsi is in Whiteman kontri. Me I cannot talk because I don’t have my own child abroad”.

While Lumsi was successfully working as a domestic servant and nanny despite her undocumented status, this was not the case for some of her friends who were unfortunately caught and deported. In analysing these situations, families consider that those who are deported are lazy, they didn’t work hard enough, were not smart enough to get themselves into a situation where they can stay. In other instances, families concluded that they were unlucky— “na my own bad luck” (which means it is my own back luck) a parent told me as she explained the struggles her son is going through as an undocumented migrant in the UK:

“Other people who went after him already have their book²⁶⁶ (meaning their legal residence); they have even come to visit and go back, but he has been there for five years and still does not have his book. He sometimes sends me money but he says he has to work only small-small jobs because he doesn’t have his book. I am sure that if my child had his book, he would have built me a mansion”.

Yet even with her son’s undocumented status, this lady was happy. She said: “it is better that he stays there than to be in Cameroon, people are here fighting for their children to go. Mine has already gone, that gives me some satisfaction and pride, and it gives me hope that things will be better. Even if he is not really sending me

²⁶⁶ Amongst the uneducated people in especially Anglophone Cameroon, legal papers are known as book (in a generic sense) in Pidgin. For example car documents are ‘book for motor’, land documents are ‘book for land’, passport is ‘book for go Whiteman kontri’ to name a few.

any high amount of money, I know that it shall be well one day. God is with him”.

If Mama Clara is not receiving any substantial financial benefit from her son, she at least has status, what Bourdieu, (1986) described as social capital. He writes that social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to a possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships. Thus in Bourdieu’s sense, if mama Clara does not benefit much in terms of the actual financial resource, at least she possesses a social resource distinct from her peers who have no child or children abroad.

As a matter of fact, when migrating abroad, especially to Whiteman kontri, people are supposed to “shine their eyes”, meaning they have to be sharp/smart/pushy. I interviewed families of two undocumented migrants who have voluntarily returned home for ‘good’²⁶⁷ (at least for the time being. Recently I spoke with one of them and she is seeking out means to travel abroad). When asked what families think about their migrants who have returned, I was told they have done their best but there is no reason to come back to Cameroon when one can still persevere over there and make it. A cousin of one of my informants told me that “those who come back because they don’t have papers are lazy, they should stay there and try and try again, and one day God will see them through”, she noted. To further analyse the statement of this informant, to be ‘lazy’ and return home means that migrants deprive their families of the advantages they potentially have as a result of them being *present* in Mbeng. The brother of one Cameroonian migrant explained this to me in the following words: “sometimes just to know that you have a sibling abroad gives you hope. It gives you hope that it will be better. Whether your sibling has papers or not is not the matter, the important thing is that s/he is there. At least, you can also sit somewhere and brag that you have a brother or sister abroad”.

²⁶⁷ It wasn’t possible for me to get statistics of Cameroonian migrants who have returned home for good. I couldn’t get it online or through the relevant ministries concerned. In addition, keeping track of returnees can be quite complicated because a person might be claiming to return home for good while s/he is looking for means to travel to another country.

Sorcery threats in migration and remittance flows

“Before, people said that sorcery does not cross water but today it boards an airplane”²⁶⁸ (Cameroonian migrant in Switzerland).

This migrant made this statement in the course of a discussion in one of our Cameroonian meetings held on July 30th 2016. Another migrant was complaining that after staying in Switzerland for 25 years, it is only now that she could build a house for herself at the age of 59. “...for all the years that I have been here, I have only worked for my family. Sending money home all the time. It was as if I was to take care of the problems of the entire village... I tell you that I even build a house for one of my aunt, she was the only surviving sister of my mum and she only had a child who died when he was 20 years old in a car accident. I even forgot about my own self, I just focused on helping people back home... it was as if I was bewitched (*envouter*)²⁶⁹ just to be working for them... Now I am old and I don’t have that same force to work for them anymore” (my translation from French). Another member echoed that “it is the mentality, when we come here, we only think first about families back home, you don’t think about yourself. That is how it is. Some of us come here and will not stop working just to meet up with family problems...” (My translation from French).

²⁶⁸ Original remark in French: « Avant, les gens disent que la sorcellerie ne traverse pas l’eau mais aujourd’hui ça prend même l’avion ».

²⁶⁹ *Envu* is the Beti form of “witchcraft of the house” (Geschiere, (1997b: 140) which means sacrificing a kin to the occult to work for the enrichment of the occultist. Amongst other ethnicities, it is referred to as *djambe* for the Makas in the East region, *famla* for the Bamilekes, *ekong* for the Dualas, *nyongo* for the anglophones. So when my informant said that “c’est comme ci j’étais envouter”, she was metaphorically associating her selfless commitment to her family to the imagery of someone who has been sacrificed to *envu*. I know this because I asked her what is *envouter*, she said “c’est un pratique de sorcellerie chez nous les Betis, cest que les Bamileke appellent *famla*”. It was when she used the word *envouter* (‘sacrificed’) that another member commented that « Avant, les gens dire que la sorcellerie ne traverse pas l’eau mais aujourd’hui ça prend même l’avion ».

This chapter examines how sorcery/witchcraft, used as a discourse to explain fortune and misfortune is embedded in the remittance patterns of Cameroonian migrants vis-à-vis their families back home. But before I do so, let me briefly provide a conceptual reflection on the term witchcraft and sorcery.

A note on terminology

In distinguishing witchcraft and sorcery for the Azande, Evans-Pritchard, (1937) notes that, the: “Azande believe that some people are witches and can injure them of an inherent quality. A witch performs no rite, utters no spell, and possesses no medicines. An act of witchcraft is a psychic act. They believe also that sorcerers may do them ill by performing magic rites with bad medicines” (pg. 21). “If a man becomes suddenly and acutely ill, he may be sure that he is a victim of sorcery and not witchcraft. The effect of witchcraft leads to death by slow stages, for it is only when a witch has eaten all the souls of a vital organ that death ensues” (pg.38)²⁷⁰.

Building on the work of Evans-Pritchard and other studies on witchcraft, Turner, (1964) writes that “the observation of diviners at work and the study of their apparatus reveal that in African societies, beliefs may include a multiplicity of types of mystical evildoers, who practise a wide variety of ways of causing mystical harm. This variety of beliefs is generated in some measure by the variety of concrete circumstances where misfortune is mystically explained” (pg. 18). For him, “witchcraft may be unconscious and involuntary, though it is often intentional, inherited and inherent. Sorcery is always conscious and voluntary, and is taught and often bought. Witchcraft operates directly and sorcery indirectly through spells, rites, and medicines” (pg. 319). Nonetheless, he cautions that this explicit verbal distinction of witchcraft and sorcery among the Azande is not made in many other Bantu ethnic groups in Central Africa. Rather, these ethnic

²⁷⁰ See also Douglas, (1963) and LeVine (1963). Later on, Douglas, (1999 : 177) maintains that , “under the term ‘sorcerers’ I would include any power to wreak harm, not like a robber might work, secretly at night but by occult, supernatural means”.

groups possess a wide range of beliefs about types of persons who seek harm to their fellows by non-empirical means (pg. 19-20).

Likewise, the distinction between witchcraft and sorcery is not explicit in Cameroon. Therefore in this chapter, I use the terms witchcraft and sorcery interchangeably and these refer to various acts of misfortune, occultism, and evil spirits. In Cameroon, Francophones speak of sorcellerie (sorcery) while Anglophones mostly speak of witchcraft. Nonetheless, I am aware that the terms witchcraft and sorcery are still limited in terms of their ability to describe certain socio-cultural and economic events and practices. Geschiere, (1997a: 340) noted the same terminology puzzle. He writes that: “In several respects, these terms distort the meaning of the African terms of which they are supposed to be the translation. The problem is especially that both “sorcery” and “witchcraft” have strong pejorative overtones, while the African terms often have a much broader meaning, covering also more positive aspects of the occult forces... in the Cameroonian societies discussed here, it is difficult to distinguish sharply between “witchcraft” and “sorcery””.

Witchcraft (nyongo) and remittance flows

“In Cameroon, such reflections of new forms of wealth find expression in beliefs in a new form of witchcraft that bears various names: ekong, famla, kupe, nyongo. They have, however, one basic idea in common: a new type of witches who no longer eat their victims, but transform them into a kind of zombie and put them to work in “invisible plantations”...People insist on the novelty of this form of witchcraft and relate it to the arrival of the Europeans and the introduction of new luxury items” (Geschiere, 1997b: 139)

In my conversations with Cameroonian migrants, I heard stories of sorcery practices affecting migrants. Whether this phenomenon is based on mere accusations or are real, one undisputable fact is that witchcraft discourses are ever present in the daily life experiences of Cameroonians. For example in 2008 while working as a research assistant, my boss sent me to buy her phone credit. She needed the receipts so that she can present her expenses to her university. But due to the lack of a receipt system in Cameroon, I had a book where

I asked people to sign each time I buy something. I have been met with so many hesitations and accusations from people refusing to sign; “why do you want me to sign”? “What do you want to do with my signature”? were the questions people often asked, and in some cases they refused to sign. When I paid for the phone credit, I brought out my little book for the sales woman to sign. She looked at me and then she said: “why do you want me to sign, what do you want to do with my signature? Do you want to sacrifice me to the occult?” (You want take me for *nyongo*? she asked in Pidgin English). Luckily, my boss was standing at a petrol station about 30 meters away. So I explained to this lady that “it was not for me, it is for the white lady you see over there (pointing to my boss), she is the one that ask me for this. Please I am begging you to sign, I need to show this to her to proof that this is actually the amount I paid. You know how this white people are, if you don’t sign, she might not believe me”, I insisted. It is only after I had explained myself and convinced the seller that she agreed to sign my receipt book.

In a similar situation, an informant (Temea) told me that, once she sent money to her mum to give to a neighbour. Her mum didn’t give the money immediately; she used the money that my informant had sent. So Temea asked her mum why she did so. The mum replied that she didn’t want to give what Temea had sent. She had to go to the market and sell and give her own money to the neighbour. The son of that neighbour drowned and they do not know what caused it. So the mum preferred to give her own money so that in case of anything, it will be her who will die and not Temea. Personally, I was always cautioned by my siblings to be very careful each time I travelled home. One of my sisters even advised me not to eat in people’s houses. When I went to visit and someone gave me food, she advised me to decline with the pretext that I was watching my weight (although it is culturally impolite to refuse food when on a visit to someone’s house). Coming from abroad, I suddenly had to invent certain tactics to bypass cultural practices and that wasn’t the case before I travelled.

I have used these anecdotes to show how material realities are always embedded in magical interpretations in Cameroon as documented in Moore and Sanders, (2001). The anecdotes are a way

to open up the discussion and to demonstrate how witchcraft beliefs are expressed in everyday life for Cameroonians. These witchcraft representations varied in forms and the way they are manifested. However, my concern in this book is not to go in-depth into what lies behind these discourses (for an analysis, see Fisiy and Geschiere, 1991, 2001, Geschiere, 1997a, b, 2013). What I want to show here is how witchcraft once considered a family affair has transcended the boundaries of the household and family with international migration practices²⁷¹. As a matter of fact, Geschiere, (2015) confirms that “the witchcraft of the house has gone global”. This means that witches or those possessing occult powers are considered capable of afflicting their victims even across great geographical distances and surpass intimate family bounds. In this subsection, I will examine how migrants complain about excessive demands from families. They do so by metaphorically alluding to a type of witchcraft call *nyongo* (zombification).

Witchcraft beliefs in Cameroon are manifested in different ways and have been described differently in the different ethnic regions of Cameroon, some of which are *djambe, famla, msa, nyongo, atchul*, to cite a few (Rowlands and Warnier 1988, Fisiy and Geschiere 1991, 2001 Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 1998, Geschiere 1997b, 2013, Warnier 1993b, 1995, Ardener, 1996, Nyamnjoh 2001, 2005). . There is also what Warnier called *balok* (in Pidgin English this translates as bad luck which means misfortune). In this form of sorcery, misfortune befalls the victim. S/he is cursed and cannot succeed in life unless s/he is cleansed (Warnier, 1993b: 149-157).

Ardener, (1970 [1996]: 246) was one of the earliest scholars to write on witchcraft discourses in Cameroon, examining the relationship between witchcraft and success in relation to migration. He examined this through the framework of what he called witchcraft economics. In his study on the coastal people of Cameroon, Ardener found out that *liemba* which is a ‘classical’ form of witchcraft constitute a great danger to the wellbeing of the Bakweris. It is generally regarded as inborn but can also be passed on

²⁷¹ Van Dijk, (2001) study describe how ‘madams’, that is, women who trafficked girls from Nigeria use witchcraft as a way to compel the girls to keep on working in prostitution.

to a person who does not possess it. Ardener writes that: “witches may be of either sex and are said to leave their bodies at night and ‘eat’ people so that they become ill and die” (pg. 246). With the creation of the plantations and the influx of many ‘immigrants’ in the Bakweri localities, many problems destabilised the once upon a time stable community, where food and livestock was plentiful. These problems were the breakdown of marriages, prostitution, concubinage and low birth rate, venereal diseases and the problem of a new form of witchcraft— *nyongo*. Ardener writes that:

“For the intervening years the Bakweri had come to believe in a new kind of witchcraft compared with which the old *liemba* was regarded as almost a harmless trifle. This new kind was called *nyongo*. It was believed to have been brought in from outside by ‘wicked people’ at about the time of the First World War. It took a peculiar form. A person with *nyongo* was always prosperous, for he was a member of a witch association that had the power of causing its closest relatives, even its children, to appear to die. But in truth, they were taken away to work for their witch-masters on another mountain, Mount Kupe in the territory of the Bakossi people. On Mount Kupe, the *nyongo* people were believed to have a town and all modern conveniences, including, motor lorries²⁷². *Nyongo* people could best be recognised by their tin houses which they had been able to build with the zombie labour force of their dead relatives” (pg. 248).

With this new form of witchcraft, anyone who had a tin house was suspected of *nyongo*. Men who built their houses visibly with their own hands could not escape from *nyongo* accusations. The representation of *nyongo* is similar to *Kong* for the Dualas and the *Famla* of the Bamilekes. But the difference here is that one could become a member of the latter two forms of witchcraft associations

²⁷² The Bakossi people of Kupe Muanenguba are known to be extremely dangerous witches and wizards. For example as we drove down to Bangem, the capital of Kupe Muanenguba division in 2007, the man with whom I was sitting asked me if this was my first time coming to Bangem, and I said yes. Then he advised that: “you should be very careful, where you are going is extremely dangerous, there are so many witches and wizards there, so many”, he insisted. I thanked him for his advice as we drove further.

without knowing; see (Warnier, 1995: 269). These *Kong* and *Famla* societies operate as tontines (rotating credit associations). According to Warnier, “the contributions take the form of persons of the kin group of the member. Each member in turn offers the name of an agnate or affine, who dies, while the member is enriched. The person who has died (was sold) is reckoned to have departed for the south to secret plantations... His wages are believed to be paid directly into the society’s member bank account”. See also den Ouden, (1987: 18-19)²⁷³.

Thus from the foregoing, witchcraft discourses could be said to be characterised by intimacy and trust since those who tend to be sacrificed to the occult, that is, to work in invisible plantations were witches’ relatives, family, and friends. These themes of intimacy and trust but also of sacrifice are central to Geschiere, (2013) study. He affirms that the witchcraft of the house (*djambe le ndjan*) is the most dangerous form of witchcraft since the victims are members of the witches’ kin groups. That is to say “...these innovative *djambe* versions seemed to emanate from the intimate circles of the home and family... *Witchcraft is the danger inside*”, meaning that it is the most dangerous form of aggression because it originates from inside (Geschiere, 2013: xv-xvii, xix, 59-65).

From these witchcraft discourses and accusations, many interesting themes emanates in relation to migration and remittances. They include “eating”, trust—intimacy, migration to work in a foreign land, and enrichment. These themes form the articulation between kinship and witchcraft which are central in Cameroonian transnational migration and remittances and constitute the central theses in Nyamnjoh’s *images of nyongo amongst Cameroonian bushfallers* (2005). Nyamnjoh relates transnational migration to nyongo in a metaphoric sense. Saying that families ‘sacrifice’ their siblings (nyongo) to work as slave for them in a foreign land and send home remittances, and this is particular of the Grassfielders. If the lorries made it possible for Cameroonians, in particular the Grassfielders to discover the marvels and dangers of migration to the coastal plantations, today the airplanes have made it possible for migrants to

²⁷³ Douglas, (1999: 182-183) describes a similar form of sorcery among the Lele of DR Congo.

travel even further afield to different countries in search of better opportunities. The accusatory language of victimhood which migrants often use to describe themselves vis-à-vis their families in relation to the sometimes excessive demand for remittances prompted Nyamnjoh (2005) to equate migrants to zombies sacrificed in *nyongo* through bushfalling to work and send money to their masters (families and friends).

When I asked Cameroonian migrants what they think about sending home remittances, some of the responses are similar to a situation of zombification. One of them said:

I am here working but I can't really buy anything expensive for myself... Just because I am calculating about so many problems and so many people who need money in Cameroon. It is annoying because many of us tend to *sacrifice* our own happiness to please people back home. So you see what I mean... we are working mainly for our families.

Another migrant noted that:

Honestly this life in bush is really a *nyongo* life, you work money, you see the money but no time to enjoy. Rather you just send it to families who will just go and sit in a bar and drink and brag amongst their friends that my so and so is in Whiteman kontri...hahahahaha (laugh).

On a personal note, I met up with a friend of mine one day in one of the money transfer agencies. As we stood on the queue waiting for our turn, we started talking and I joked: "you have come to do that our usual stuff"? Then she replied (while laughing) "my sister, I have come for the usual stuff, I have come to give the money to the people that actually owns it" (and we both burst out into laughter).

The above paragraphs show images of *nyongo* in the way migrants complain about excessive remittance demands. This is because economic hardship affecting many individuals and families in Cameroon, fuelled by dashed hopes of a future in Cameroon has been instrumental in shaping the increasing trend of emigration

dynamics in Cameroon. Thus, seen in this way, one might also argue that the phenomenon of migrants ‘slaving away’ as zombies in foreign lands to improve familial economic conditions is instigated by a global capitalist system in which people have to survive by all means²⁷⁴.

Therefore judging from my informants’ responses, I would say there is a metaphorical semblance of the practice of remittance giving and zombification (*nyongo*). This is justified by the fact that both talk about the duties that come with being part of a group, in this case, a family. But unlike the real *nyongo* as described above by Ardener, (1970 [1996]), when migrants describe their situation as zombification, it doesn’t mean that they have been spiritually sacrificed to the occult.

Rather, they, migrants tend to see themselves to be working for their families in the same way that those who have been sacrificed to *nyongo* work in foreign lands for the enrichment of their ‘bewitcher’ (occultist). Whatever the case, working to support families is the implicit unspoken agreement for why families invest in migration. One of my informants captures this better when she said “... I understand that it is not easy for us here as well, but what did you come here to do if not to better your condition and that of your family? I mean that is why we are here”. Bearing this in mind, two questions might raise: firstly, how does jealousy triggers the danger from within (witchcraft) vis-à-vis Cameroonian bushfallers? Secondly, what are the repercussions for those persons who fail to (re)distribute? In other words, in what ways do families in Cameroon bind migrants who might attempt to ‘forget’ them? I address these in the sections below.

²⁷⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, (1999: 20, 25) also use this image of zombification in describing night shift workers working in the alien economy. For the Comaroffs, migration and zombiehood originates from “social and material transformations sparked by the rapid rise of capitalism on a global scale, a process that has intensified market competition; translocalized the division of labour; rendered the national politics and the economies increasingly porous, less sovereign; set many people in motion and disrupted their sense of place...” See also Taussig, (2010) studies on commodity fetishism in South America. For him, it is the capitalist system that is the real evil, (that is, the real *nyongo*); transforming people into zombies, that is, endless workers (pg.xvi, 4-5).

Witchcraft pressures and non-(re)distribution: remittances and the weakness of strong ties

"When you don't give, they complain, when you give, they use it against you..."

(Celine, 33 years old)

"The whites used their witchcraft to invent things and the Blackman used his to kill his brothers" (a popular African saying which is also quoted in Rowlands, 1988: 516).

In the above section, I explained how the unending zeal to work and remit back home is metaphorically associated to a special type of witchcraft (*nyongo*). This present section focuses on witchcraft as a device to put pressure on those migrants who do not remit or those whose families consider that they have been disappointing and have failed to meet remittance expectations.

If bushfalling is synonymous to a hunter that goes to the bush to hunt and bring home game to feed the family, it therefore means that witchcraft is used in the situation where a hunter goes to the bush, hunt, and do not bring home food/game to feed the family but rather choses to make 'a home in the bush' (meaning to be selfish and not sharing). The family at home considers such actions as betrayal of his/her family obligations and this could be interpreted as a break in the moral economy that I explained in chapter 8²⁷⁵.

In Cameroon, a migrant has a moral obligation to remit not only to his immediate family but to the extended family and even to friends. Thus, it is but normal that an uncle or aunt call a migrant at any time to ask for money and other items even though s/he never contributed in any way to the upkeep of the migrant while in Cameroon. I have experienced situations where an uncle that I have never met in my life sent a message through a cousin of mine that I should send him 'something' for Christmas; that is, to send him money and a mobile phone. Obviously, he sees himself as being entitled to demand remittances from me. Such demands cannot be overlooked, no matter how hard one tries. Rowlands, (1988) in his

²⁷⁵ Carling, (2008b: 1459) calls this the moral economy of ingratitude, a phrase he used to describe migrants who tend to forget where they come from by not keeping in touch either through phone calls or remittances.

study on the material culture of success in Cameroon confirms that achievement does not belong to one person in the individualistic sense but to the entire family and the higher the promotion or achievement, the larger the family unit that will come to claim its share (pg. 511-512).

According to some of my informants, the reasons why they have not been able to succeed in bush as they would have like to is because they have been bewitched by families back home²⁷⁶. Jealousy sets in when members of the extended family feels that their own children are not succeeding, or haven't succeeded. Their children are not bushfallers, so they can't really directly benefit from the flow of remittances (section 9.6)²⁷⁷. In what follows, I narrate two stories to exemplify how migrants identified as sorcery certain acts that have been inflicted on them by families back at home. At the end of these case studies, I provide a discussion and analysis on the theme of witchcraft as some sort of pressure for non-flow or inadequate flow of remittances *over time*. Time is important in talking about remittances because migrants are expected to send remittances regularly as problems emerge.

The first case study is that of Abel, as told to me by her sister Celine. The second is Brigitte who told me her story. These stories illustrate how real or perceived misfortune befalls those who do not share the proceeds from migration with their kindred.

²⁷⁶ Families who depend on the remittances of the migrant (in this case the 'operational' family—the one who financed the migration as mentioned earlier in chapter 6) want the migrant to succeed by any means possible. Some of them will even pray to God and/or pour libation calling on God or the ancestors to bless the migrant so that s/he should be successful but this is not the case with the 'general' (extended) family (the one who doesn't depend on the remittances, those who didn't invest in the migration and/or the up-bringing of the migrant). Witchcraft can come from them.

²⁷⁷In such cases, they become jealous because they feel that what they are receiving as remittances is not enough. Åkesson, (2004) describes similar complaints of no or inadequate remittances from Cape Verdean migrants families. She further notes that in some situations, even when the migrants remit, families back home still complain of not receiving any remittances, probably because what they receive is insufficient.

Case study 1: Abel and his maternal uncle

Abel, the elder brother of one of my informants, is living in the US. Abel travelled to Cameroon for holidays in December 2009. After being away for 18 years, he thought that it was important for him to meet with his nuclear and extended family. He shared shoes, clothes, and money with family members including neighbours in his neighbourhood in Bamenda where he grew up. It is said that one of Abel's maternal uncles took the money that Abel gave him and "spoiled" it, that is to say he used the money to bewitched Abel. According to my friend, her uncle was angry because he thought the 20,000FCFA that Abel gave him was a small amount. After staying in the US for so long and seeing the investments that Abel had back home, he wanted more. So he was annoyed and wanted to make Abel suffer. Abel's family became aware of this because an aunt told Abel that this uncle had complained that the money Abel gave him was not enough. He complained that:

He has been in America for so many years, look at the investments he has here. He has built houses here and there. He came from America with a big car only to come and give me 20.000 FCFA²⁷⁸.

When Abel returned to the US after his vacation, he fell sick a week later. His right hand started to swell and it was also very painful. In addition, Abel was having very bad nightmares. For many nights he dreamt that he was walking in a graveyard with a white cloth around his body. In these nightmares, he will often see dead family members. Abel went to the hospital and the doctors in America couldn't diagnose what was the cause of his hand swelling. When Abel explained this to his parents in Cameroon, he was asked to immediately come home. But even before Abel could buy his ticket to Cameroon, his mum went to a diviner to find out what has gone wrong. It was the diviner who revealed that Abel has been bewitched and if he didn't come home immediately for treatment, something worse will happened. When his mum got this message, there was

²⁷⁸Original pidgin version: E don go shidon for America for donkey years, see the things dem wey e get-am for here. E don build house side by side, e go comot for America come for home with big motor and come give me only 20 thousand.

even greater pressure for Abel to immediately come to Cameroon since he was a bit reluctant and instead wanted to check with another bone specialist in the US. With the pressure from his parents, Abel travelled back to Cameroon. This time, even close friends and neighbours didn't know that Abel was around. Instead of staying in Bamenda, Abel was asked by his parents to stay in a hotel in Douala. Abel then took the night bus to Bamenda to meet up with his parents in the bus park and they head off to Oku where Abel stayed for 10 days receiving treatment from a traditional healer and diviner²⁷⁹.

At the end of the treatment, the diviner “worked on him”, meaning to fortify him against magico-spiritual powers of all sorts. From Oku, Abel travelled back to Douala where he spent two nights with his parents before travelling back to the US. In her final words as we wrap up our discussion, Celine said: “when you don't give, they complain, but when you give, they use it against you. One will not trust people again in that country?...”

Case study 2: Brigitte's bad luck

Brigitte is in her early thirties and comes from one of the ethnic groups in the Centre region of Cameroon. I came to know Brigitte through a friend of mine, and over time, Brigitte and I started chatting and became friends. We attended parties together and often met during weekends in the house of our common friend. Brigitte has just finished her master degree. She was brought over by her mum who paid the sum of 20,000CHF to one man who agreed to marry her in exchange. Brigitte came to Switzerland through Spain as the wife of Mr. Carlos. Since Brigitte was more than 18 years old, her mum who lives in Switzerland and is already Swiss (by citizenship) couldn't bring her over as her daughter. The only option was to pay someone to bring Brigitte over as his wife. Through some friends of friends, Brigitte's mum finally found someone in Spain and the amount demanded was equivalent to 20,000CHF. All documents

²⁷⁹ Oku is a village in the Northwest region of Cameroon. People from there are believed to be very powerful in healing supranatural illnesses. When it was diagnosed that one of my foster uncle was poisoned from his place of work, he was taken to Oku for treatment. Oku is also a popular destination where people go to see diviners to detect who is responsible for the death of a relative or sibling.

were prepared and Brigitte finally got her visa to Spain. From Spain, she came to Switzerland and enrolled in a university to complete her education.

While studying, Brigitte did menial jobs to pay for her upkeep and also take care of her sick brother in Cameroon including paying school fees of his child. When Brigitte came to Switzerland, her mum told her that she had to work and take care of her two brothers in Cameroon. Her mum was no longer in a position to do that because she had used the money she had to pay for the paper marriage for Brigitte. In addition, Brigitte should bear in mind that she will have to be responsible to bring over one of her brothers in the coming years when she will be more stable. Concerning her extended family, Brigitte didn't send much to them. She complained that her uncles (both maternal and paternal) are very wicked and very jealous. However, she sometimes did send to her cousins. For example she sent money to one of her cousins who wanted to register for an entrance examination (known in French as *concours*) into the public service. Over the years, the number of menial jobs that Brigitte did, started dropping and this meant that she could no longer continue to remit often and to as many people as before.

My friend through whom I came to know Brigitte once told me that she was afraid of some of the things a young girl like Brigitte was capable of doing. Then she explained to me that Brigitte was complaining that things were not going on well for her because she has been bewitched by her relatives in Cameroon. She sent a friend in Cameroon to see a diviner who revealed the reasons for Brigitte's supposed problems. My friend warned her that engaging into such practices like going to see a diviner are practices reserved for the elders, old people and not for young people like Brigitte, but her advice could in no way discourage Brigitte. My friend suggested that it will be better for Brigitte to pray than to go and see a diviner, given her young age.

A few weeks later, I invited Brigitte for lunch to show her how to post online advertisements for domestic jobs. Over lunch, Brigitte explained to me that things were not going on well in her life and that even as we tried to apply for these jobs, she was not sure she would

get one of them because there were forces of darkness in Cameroon that were preventing her progress. Then she explained:

I know that it is my relatives in Cameroon that are doing all these. They are jealous of my mum and her children that is why they don't want us to succeed in life. You see, since I came here, things are not moving for me, even to get a husband, no way. I mean each time I get a guy, after two or three months of dating, he will just stop communicating. Sometimes I sent a text message and no response. For example the last guy I had, he was a very good guy and he was so cool. We had been dating for two months and sometimes we will go out for dinner. But one day he just told me he doesn't want the relationship anymore. I asked him if there was anything I did wrong he should tell me so that we can talk it out but he didn't want to hear anything from me, he just ended it like that. And this is not the first time, this has been happening since I came to Switzerland. At first I just thought maybe it is just me, or that it is just my own bad luck that I am always falling for the wrong guys. But no, it wasn't actually the case, it is people from Cameroon that are tying me down.

Apart from this, I just started seeing strange things happening to me. When I keep money, it will just get missing. For example the other day I left my money in my wallet, it was 30CHF, so I bought credit for 10 francs and kept the change in my wallet. I went to church and came back. The next morning, I went to the shop to buy something, only to discover that the money had disappeared. I thought of how the money got lost and I couldn't understand so I let it pass. The same thing happened about three or four times and I thought this is not normal.

And the same is true for jobs. When I get a job at someone's house, after three or four months something will happen. Either the person will be relocating out of Switzerland, or the person will give me an excuse that s/he has found someone else. When I saw all these, I talked with my mum and she said this is really strange. Even my mum also complained that she has realised her business is no longer flourishing as before. Most of the customers that came to buy from her African shop in Bâle have stopped coming there. She has realised

that her resources are just going down the drain²⁸⁰. Even with my Spanish papers, at first everything was going well, but lately, the man has been behaving funny. And it seems he doesn't want to continue with the process and I only have one more year to get my residence. So you see, I have been tied on all angles—marriage, papers, jobs, money just disappearing. I discussed this with a friend of mine who confirmed that this was not normal and suggested that I do something. So I called another friend of mine in Cameroon and sent her to go and see a diviner to check what was going on. It was the diviner who discovered that it is my relatives back home that are causing all these and that some work needs to be done on the issue otherwise more bad luck will continue to befall me.

I didn't have money immediately to send so I said I will send later. That same month, the lady I was cleaning for accused me of having stolen her money. I was so frustrated. She said she will report me to the police and she even sent me photos to inform me that her house has hidden cameras and the information from the camera indicates that I entered into her bedroom and stole her money. I pleaded with this woman that I didn't steal her money but she wouldn't listen and she didn't believe me. So I was really worried especially because I don't have Swiss papers, I still need to wait for my Spanish papers to go through. Besides, I can only be able to stay here when I finally get a Spanish passport which will allow me stay as an EU citizen, but even that too has been blocked by the same witches (she sighs). So when this woman was sending me all these messages that if I don't bring her money she will report me to the police, I called that my friend in Cameroon and the last money I had, I sent it to her to go and see the diviner. The diviner 'worked on it' and two days later, the lady sent me a message that she has recovered her money (at this point, Brigitte took out her phone and showed me the messages that the lady had sent to her apologising for having accused her falsely. The lady also offered to give her 100CHF as compensation but Brigitte refused). It was this instance that made me

²⁸⁰ In October 2016, Brigitte's mum rented out the store because her business became so bad such that she couldn't afford to pay the rents of the store. Informing me of the situation of her mum's business on October 23rd 2016, Brigitte joked that "my mum and I need to be cleansed in the village".

to really believe that black people witchcraft is dangerous. It means that had it not been for the diviner, the lady would not have seen her money and only God knows what she would have done. The diviner also revealed that my mother's brothers are angry with my mum because she has forgotten about them. They are aggrieved that my mum left Cameroon 15 years ago when she divorced my dad and since then, she has decided to forget about them²⁸¹. I told my mum this, and she has planned to go to Cameroon in December. Really, people are wicked.

At this point, I commented that "the lady was even harder on you because you are black so there was nothing that could convince her you were not a thief".

"Yes", Brigitte confirmed, then she added that:

You know when something is done in the spiritual realm, it can only be solved in the spiritual. It was the witches that made the lady's money to disappear just so that I can get incriminated, but my God is alive. Since I discovered that all these difficulties in my life is from my relatives in Cameroon, I cut-off contact with them. I mean, I don't call them anymore. They think because I am in Switzerland so I have so much money and should be sending to them. Now, even one franc I don't send to any of them, even their children—my cousins. And by the way I don't even have money, I don't have a job. Let them continue with their evil work, but they will not succeed.

I have used these two case studies to exemplify migrants perception of what might go wrong when families perceived that they, migrants have 'forgotten' about them in relation to remittance flows. In other words, these case studies also exemplify how migrants interpret their misfortunes in terms of witchcraft pressures linked to parents/relatives that don't benefit from redistribution of the money they supposedly earn abroad. In the case of Abel, his uncle was annoyed that Abel could only give him 20.000FCFA after so many years abroad and despite his many investments. In a later conversation with Celine (Abel's sister) she told me that it was the

²⁸¹ This statement tells that Brigitte is somehow also paying for the misbehaviour of her mother.

first time Abel was giving money to this uncle. Throughout Abel's stay in the US, he didn't remit direct cash to his extended family. But in the event of death within the family, he would send money through his parents as his own contribution to purchase food and drinks to feed the mourners. Therefore, according to my informant's point of view, this absence of gifts or occasional help could have instigated such witchcraft accusations. Yet even when migrants tend to respond to this call to give, it is met with jealousy, creating tensions relating to trust—one cannot trust people in Cameroon, noted my informant.

While it can be tempting to overlook the accusation that Abel was bewitched by his uncle because he considers that Abel 'forgot' about him, the study of Moore and Sanders, (2001: 7) demonstrates that such accusations cannot be ignored. With increasing migrants transnationalism, witchcraft has also become more visible as part of the cultural repertoire in these migrants lives. In this line of thought, it can be argued that Abel's sickness was a wakeup call for him not to forget his extended family for they are part of his family and hence are entitled to his remittances or at least some gifts from time to time.

The example of Abel concurs with Carling, (2008: 1459) observation. In his study on Cape Verdean migrants in the Netherlands, he makes the case that, the act of visiting families and friends back home is essential for recognition of social ties despite geographical separation. But manifestation of communality by bringing gifts is also important in their own right. Åkesson, (2004, 2010) studies reveal that families often understate what they receive from migrants either as gifts or remittances. For example when families complain that they don't receive anything (financial remittances and/or other forms of gifts) from their migrants, it actually means they receive less than expected. This is especially the case when the family member feels s/he has a close/intimate relationship with the migrant. Families become scornful of migrants who tend to forget them.

Yet even with such right to remittance claims, an even greater problem emerges, that of trust. It is almost as if one cannot trust people in Cameroon according to my informant, Celine. To understand Celine's dilemma, we need to understand trust in relation to the fear of witchcraft within family circles and to remittance flows.

This conceptual triangle of family, remittances, and witchcraft should be recognised as relational. Their mutual articulation is best captured by what Geschiere, (1997b: 212) described as witchcraft being the dark side of kinship. He adds that, witchcraft threatens family intimacy and solidarity, yet one cannot break family ties. Rather one must learn to live with his/her sorcerer.

Witchcraft being the potentiality of aggression within the family means that as part of a family, even migrants cannot escape. But more importantly, it also shows that occult aggression can travel great geographical borders. This came out more clearly in the case of Brigitte as narrated in case study 2 above, where it is even more evident that contemporary forms of witchcraft practices in Cameroon have no borders. The story of Brigitte challenges previous representations that witchcraft cannot cross water²⁸² (see also Geschiere, 2013, 2015, Nyamnjoh, 2013). It tells us that occult aggression constitutes part of the cultural way of life for these migrants. Sabar, (2010: 112) observed a similar pattern in his study of African migrants in Israel. He found out that as long as these migrants were able to work and send home money, witchcraft accusations were non-existent. Rather, in the course of his interviews, what he heard from these migrants was that families, including the extended families were very supportive, although at the same time families were also very demanding. The narratives of these migrants were that of family solidarity and a longing for home. These narratives were reversed when economic crises set in. Economic crisis made it difficult for these migrants to have gainful employment and hence they couldn't remit back home. With such difficulties,

²⁸² Growing up as child, I also held true to this belief that witchcraft doesn't cross water based on the stories I heard. For example a neighbour once told me that before they boarded their canoe to cross the sea into Nigeria, the canoe driver warned that anyone who has 'something bad' in his/her belly should take it out because if they get into the middle of the sea, the canoe might capsize because witchcraft does not cross water. In another story, an Ibibio immigrant from Nigerian who was working with the CDC told my dad that their canoe turned around seven times due to strong waves when they got into the middle of the sea. He associated this to the fact that one of the passengers was a witch or at least there was someone possessing a witchcraft substance/power hence the canoe could not sail through. It is also said that sea water is a strong medicine used to cure supernatural diseases.

witchcraft discourses and the dangers of evil spirits became a major form of explanation for these migrants. At this point, Sabar, (2010: 112) writes that: “the primordial fear of their family’s ability to cause them harm and the talk about evil spirits and evil powers crossing borders became louder and more frequent...”

Sabar, (2010) observation with African migrants in Israel best describes the situation of Brigitte. The complaints about bad luck and being “tied down” reveal important information of Brigitte’s interpretations of her inability to succeed— to work and remit as other successful migrants. Although she is living thousands of kilometres from her home in Cameroon, her complaints illustrate that, for her, families and in particular the extended family are capable of afflicting bad luck to migrants even across far away borders. This same bad luck, (what Warnier, 1993b: 75-76 described as *panier percé*)²⁸³ is also affecting Brigitte’s mum in her business. Her business is no longer thriving as before. For Brigitte, being far away from home couldn’t deter her family’s will to affect. A misfortune (as revealed by a diviner), was due to the fact that both Brigitte and her mum have ‘forgotten’ about the family in Cameroon. This case of Brigitte reveals that the bad behaviour of her mother has effects on her (Brigitte’s) fate. This is often a general occurrence in witchcraft practices where a daughter can pay for her mother’s misbehaviour. In the same way a son can pay for his father’s. This is called the dissociation between misfortune causation. Brigitte uses bad luck and the fact that she has been “tied down” as an explanation for her problems. Nyamnjoh, (2013: 261) describes such situation as transcultural beliefs and tensions. Yet even more important in the case of Brigitte is a revelation of the relationship between the family, migration, remittances, and the borderless nature of witchcraft— (confirming to Geschiere, 2015 observation that, indeed, “the witchcraft of the house has gone global”).

The case of Brigitte resonates with remarks often made by anthropologists that to put the blame of one’s misfortune on others

²⁸³ According to Warnier, *panier percé* is when someone’s achievements suddenly start to decline due to failure to redistribute (I have discussed this at length in the section below).

allow people not to indemnify themselves from blame or avoid placing the blame on themselves.

To further explore this theme of migration-remittances-witchcraft, I use the case study of pa Mathias below. If the above subsection examines witchcraft discourses for migrants across borders, this later subsection investigates Cameroonian familial tensions triggered by jealousy in relation to remittances.

Case study 3: Mr. Mathias and his bushfaller children

Warnier, (1993b: 75-76) maintains that redistribution is a central part of Cameroonian life and especially among Grassfielders. As a matter of fact distribution and redistribution are so central that failure to comply can lead to severe consequences. Warnier gave the example of a son-in-law who lied to his mother-in-law that his business was not moving on well so he was really broke, and that it was the reason why he couldn't share/distribute. Using the image of the "panier percé", Warnier, (1993b: 139-140, 145-162) makes the case that misfortune will befall those who do not share with their kinsmen. Metaphorically, the bewitched person becomes like a basket that suddenly become porous and all the resources will leak out. "Atchul", "balok", and "msa" which are various types of witchcraft practices will cause an individual's basket of achievements, resources, and fortunes to pour out. In some cases, failure to redistribute will lead to death. Such is the case of Mr. Matthias. His story exemplifies the discourses of witchcraft afflicted to remittance receivers who tend to 'eat alone'.

Mr. Matthias was in his early 70s. He was one of our neighbours and a friend to my dad when we lived in the CDC plantation camp in Tiko. Both he and my dad were plantation workers who migrated from the Grassfields and later resettled in Buea upon retirement. Pa Matthias as he was usually referred to, was married to two wives. During our numerous conversations before I left Cameroon and even after I went back in 2014 for fieldwork, Pa Matthias often took pride for the success of his children. Being married to two wives, he told me that his first wife was the choice of his father. When his father saw that it was time for him to get married, he got a wife for him. Pa Matthias later migrated to the coast to work in the plantations

and after some years, he married a second wife. In explaining this to me, he said: “the first wife was the choice of my father and the second wife was my choice. You know, in our days you cannot deny something that your father gives you. It is not like you people now who just do as you want”. Pa Matthias had about 11 children from his two wives although rumours in the neighbourhood hold that he also had children out of marriage. The first wife had 8 children and the second wife had 3. Pa Matthias told me that the second wife didn’t want to have kids, she preferred not to be married, that is to say she preferred “life outside” so he let her go.

Pa Matthias now lives with his first wife in Buea in a house that was built by her children. Four of her children are in South Africa. The first child who travelled brought over the other siblings and they decided to bring over one of the children from the second wife. One other daughter of pa Matthias travelled to Dubai but she came back after three months saying that things were tough there. As Pa Matthias and I discussed, he told me:

Your friend is very lazy, she is not hardworking like you. Her brothers struggled and sent her to Whiteman kontri and she came back. And that is the country of this oil people and I heard there is money there, but she is just being lazy and she came back to come and sit in my house with no husband and no future plans. I have told her I will not continue to let her stay in my house like that. She has to go out and search for better opportunities like her mates.

I met Gloria, the daughter of pa Matthias, and invited her for drinks. As we sat in the bar and chatted, she told me she was in Dubai and things were difficult for her. She didn’t have a job and to be able to stay in Dubai she needed to get a job so that the company or enterprise will then apply for her residence permit. She added that:

When I couldn’t find something, I decided to do a babysitting job but the woman was very mean, she almost turned me into a slave so I had to quit, I couldn’t continue. But when I came and explained to papa, he couldn’t just believe it, he instead told me I was lazy. Saying that there are many young people who go to Dubai and they are doing fine. You see, people just hear that there is money in Dubai, but they

don't know it is also not easy there as well. But the truth is that if you get a better job, it is well paid. But I wasn't just lucky enough to find one. Now I am doing hair dressing and will prefer to go to South Africa. I think it will be better there than in Dubai because there I can open a hair saloon, but in Dubai, there are not many black people so it is not the same, she concluded.

After five hours hangout where we ate, drank, and talked, we finally parted ways. Two days later, pa Matthias came to my parents place. Our homes are just a few meters apart so pa Matthias and my dad were always chatting. Their numerous and unending discussions most of the time concerned life in the good old days of the CDC, politics in the days of British Southern Cameroon, the hey days of post-independence president Ahmadou Ahidjo , the corrupt and spoilt regime of president Paul Biya, to cite a few. Pa Matthias was known in the community as the 'opposant' (a French word for opponent) because he was very strict, as they say. In the local community development association that executes various community-based projects, he wanted that the quarter head (known as chef de quartier in French) to give a clear account of the community water fund budget; and he opposed any unscrupulous spending that would only include drinking and eating. And because of these, he was both liked and disliked by the different members of the local community association. Some of the locals often grumbled that pa Mathias was not even an autochthon, he was a graffi (meaning from the Grassfield), an immigrant, yet he was critical as if he was a "son of the soil".

Pa Matthias lived in a nicely build and furnished 6-rooms apartment house that was built (financed) by his children abroad. In congratulating me for being a hardworking child, pa Matthias told me I was the same as my big brothers (meaning his sons) who are in South Africa. He added that:

They are making sure that I am well and I thank God for that. You see even that taxi, (pointing to the taxi that was parked in front of his house) they are the ones that sent it so that I can be having a daily income from the taxi even though sometimes the taxi driver does not give me the correct amount of daily taxi balance, but at least I have something. If you go down there, after

that mango tree (pointing to a tree about 300 meters from where we were standing) I have two plots of land there and I also have some elsewhere. I told your brothers to send me money so that I can buy and keep for them. Tomorrow if they want to make any investment, the most important thing which is land will already be there. You know times are changing so if you don't secure land now, you come back to this community three years from now, you will not have it. As you are there in white man kontri you should be thinking about investment, you know this is your home. You have to invest here as well so that even if you are having money from over there, you should have something here at home that will be bringing you income as well.

I came back to Geneva in March. A month later, I was awoken from my sleep by an early morning call from my mum who announced that pa Matthias was dead. "What"? I shouted, "What happened? He wasn't sick when I left. So what happened"? I was so sad that I told my mum I will call her back and hanged up the phone. I was heartbroken and wept. He was a man I have known since my childhood. The next day I was talking with a friend of mine in Germany and shared with her the sad news of a man who was a very dear family friend to us. Hearing his trajectory and the fact that his children were abroad, my friend without hesitation immediately told me: "I am sure he has been 'knocked down' from the village", meaning he has been killed by relatives in the village through witchcraft. I paused for a moment, and told my friend "may be you are right, but how can you immediately just conclude like that"? She responded that, "we know these things, we know how dangerous people can be, including one's own kin, and especially given that pa Mathias has many children abroad". After my discussion with my friend, I called my mum to actually find out what killed pa Matthias. My mum didn't answer me in clear language but spoke in parables saying:

When you have something, it is better to put it under your bed; even when people can see that you have it, do not show it off, do not talk about it a lot, and do not brag about it. Rather when you can, share with those you can. But be careful, and be very watchful. You know pa

Matthias was someone who was very open, he said his private life to many people, and it is from here that his death came.

“You mean they killed him because he talks a lot? Is it because he is an ‘opposant’”? I asked. “Not only that, many things. But let’s live it there, let’s not talk about it”, my mum said. I probed further by asking whether he was really sick. “No, not really sick”, my mum responded. She continued that:

He only complained about headache, and that was all. You remember he said he will go to the village, so when you left, he went to the village I think it was for the cry-die (death celebration) of one of his uncles, it was after his trip from the village that he fell sick, two days later he died. People are suspecting his brother in the village. I heard from one of their tribesmen that the brother was complaining that pa Matthias didn’t come and visit him in the village. And that same tribe man said the children of one of the brothers of pa Matthias are not doing well, none of them has gone oversea; they are all in Bamenda, so you know all this jealousy can lead to a situation like this.

“Oh no, that is so sad”, I echoed. “Sad indeed” my mum confirmed; then she said “maybe the brother wanted pa Matthias to send his share of the money and the things that his children send from Whiteman kontrì”. “But it would have been better for the brother to say it than to kill him”, I continued. “Say it”? My mum asked, then she continued that:

Some people will never talk, they will just act. That is why you see from time to time when I have something I give to your aunts and uncles and say that you are the one who sent it to them. Even if it is one soap, I will just give them and say take this, it is Mangoh (short form of my name Atekmangoh) who sent it, as she is still in school, she does not really have anything. That is how it ought to be done.

“Will the children come to Cameroon for the burial”? I asked. “I don’t know, may be the first born will come, I am not sure their mum will accept that all of them should come, the manner in which their

dad died is scary, so I don't think their mum will accept, but I don't know. The corpse is still in the mortuary, I spoke with his wife and the date for the removal of the corpse has not been decided yet", she concluded.

I told my mum she should inform me once the date is decided. After a week, I sent 20,000FCFA to my mum to give to pa Matthias' wife as my own support to buy drinks for the mourners.

This case of pa Mathias demonstrates that giving away can be a way to deter jealousy and any consequences that such jealousy might bring. Another strategy is to keep quiet, (that is not to be boastful) and underplay your luck. But to understand the bottom line of this remittance-induced witchcraft accusations, we must first recognised the importance that is attached to "Whiteman cargo" (gifts/items from abroad) and financial remittances in Cameroon. For example, friends and family back at home tend to pay so much attention to goods from Europe even if they are the lowest of quality. The main issue here is not the price, but the place where these goods come from. To offer a relative even a t-shirt from abroad means that s/he can take pride in the midst of friends that the t-shirt s/he is wearing is from abroad. Yet, jealousy and witchcraft can bring problems to a parent who is proud of his/her children's successes in the midst of his kindred and/or friends who do not have bushfallers²⁸⁴.

In their study, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, (2000) maintains that the home village remains the place of refuge for urbanites and migrants alike. And this means that any achievement attained by these urbanites and migrants need to be shared with kin. Relatives in the village cannot and should not be forgotten. For as Nyamnjoh, (2001: 31) notes, achievement has no meanings unless it is attained as part of, and on behalf of one's family. This notion of seeing personal success as family success, and by extension as community success is reinforced amongst the Grassfielders for whom personal success is essentially destructive unless used for the good of all and this ensures that such achievements are accompanied by egalitarian redistribution mechanisms (Rowlands, 1994 in Nyamnjoh, 2001: 42-43). In a sense, this means that personal success is enjoyable only if

²⁸⁴ Rasmussen, (2001: 141) described such forms of witchcraft as characterized by envy, desire, and in particular tensions between sharing and hoarding.

you have been able to share a part of your wealth to make significant others also happy.

Therefore although pa Mathias lived in the city, had invested in his children and was reaping the benefits of his hard work through the remittances that his children sent to him, his brothers in the village consider themselves neglected. After seeking remedy from a diviner to counteract a witchcraft affliction by her foster father, an informant of Feldman-Savelsberg, (1999: 193) describe the relationship between city and village dwellers in Cameroon in the following words:

“People fall ill and even die more now than in the past because of a conflict between modern, city life and village life, a conflict between haves and have-nots that erupts in jealousy. Villagers say of their city relatives, “Now you live like whites. You do not even like to eat our village food or drink our water”... The jealous villagers can perform sorcery, or do evil things to make them fall ill. The city dwellers have been made vulnerable by ...their ignorance of custom. The illnesses they catch are undetectable by hospitals and of long duration. If one is unlucky, the cause is never discovered and one dies”²⁸⁵.

In a society where ‘a child is one person’s only in the womb’ (Nyamnjoh, 2002b)²⁸⁶, personal success must be tie-up to collective wellbeing. Pa Mathias was proud for what his children have done for him—built him a house, provided him with a source of income in addition to occasional flows of cash and goods. Nonetheless, there was a danger involve in this desire to eat alone. This danger was made

²⁸⁵ This same reasoning quoted here and the explanations people gave as to what caused the death of pa Mathias resonates with Evans-Pritchard, (1937) observation that for the Azande, greed may be a starting point for anger— “‘Death has always a cause, and no man dies without reason,’ meaning that death results always from some enmity. The strongest of men die from witchcraft due to ill will... It is witchcraft which kills a man, but it is uncharitableness that drives a witch to murder” (pg. 111).

²⁸⁶ In Cameroon, it is said that a child belongs to his/her biological parents only when s/he is in the mother’s womb. When born, a child belongs to the entire community. That is why a neighbour or even a passer-by can discipline a child when s/he sees the child is misbehaving.

visible through the gossips circulating in the neighbourhood (and confirmed by one of pa Matthias tribesmen) that the death of pa Mathias was a consequence of his ‘unwillingness’ to share the remittances he received with his kin. It is in such circumstances that Nyamnjoh, (2001: 42) affirms that: “as long as the wider family is not integrated clearly and unambiguously, as long as they are not made to feel part of that success, there is a problem”.

Having discussed how witchcraft discourses are intrinsic in Cameroonian migrants’ remittances, this later sub-section examines how migrants navigate through the ‘threats’ that characterise family relations across transnational spaces.

Containing witchcraft adversities in Cameroonian migration and remittances

Being aware that migrants cannot escape from any form of affliction even when they are far from home, this section focuses on the various ways that migrants avoid them. Not all the migrants interviewed for this study expressed fears of witchcraft. Yet, these migrants remain conscious of the fact that “people’s bellies are not good in Cameroon”.

Migrants believe in general that one can never stay without remitting. Remittances to families and friends tend to neutralise any potential evil that someone might have against you. Some of the ways to contained witchcraft adversities are through giving/sharing, not being boastful about one’s success, visiting a diviner to be fortified against evil spirits (as we have seen above), performing some rites e.g. offering thanks giving or a memorial service in church and/or performing certain rituals to please the ‘forgotten’ ancestors e.g. building a tomb for a deceased, or other death rituals to honour dead parents and/or ancestors to ward off any potential wrath they might inflict.

Some migrants attribute their difficulties in Europe to failure to perform certain cultural rites. Even families themselves use these cultural practices as a way to put pressure on migrants to remit. Nyamnjoh, (2005: 251-253) observes that one of the ways families threaten migrants who do not remit is by reminding them that

tradition will indict all those who fail to remember their families back home. In what follows, I examine migrants' involvement in these practices as antidote to neutralise sorcery attacks.

Once I gave money to one of my paternal aunts when I was in Cameroon. When leaving Cameroon, I paid her a visit to inform her I was leaving. Before I left her house, she opened my hands and spat on them as a means of protection but also as a blessing. While spitting, she said: "your path will remain very wide. Nothing evil will see your shadow... You shall remain *ma-ngob* (meaning mother stone as in my name Atekmangoh which means Atek the mother stone)"²⁸⁷. A kind of assurance that I am protected against any kind of sorcery danger.

Another means is through paying allegiance to one's ancestors. These include conducting a memorial service to honour a dead parent, or constructing a modern tomb for a deceased parent. For instance when my friend Salome saw that things were not going on so well for her, she sent money to her siblings to do a memorial service for her dad who died 5 years ago. In 2014 when I spoke with Salome, she told me that after the memorial service of her dad, she has been getting a lot of openings.

After-death rituals are vital lineage events that cannot be overlooked. But when these rituals are delayed for too long, it is believed that the deceased will be angry and s/he will cause misfortune to befall the families concerned. Being afar, even migrants cannot escape the wrath of angry ancestors. According to Feldman-Savelsberg, (1999: 51-55), it is believed that the ancestors 'know' and 'see' what their descendants are doing. In addition, "ancestors are quite sensitive about how they are treated by their descendants..." They like to be taken care of, through special rituals and sacrifices, including specially built tombs. Thus failure to honour one's ancestors in relation to delayed after-death celebrations might result

²⁸⁷ Amongst the Grassfielders, saliva is use for blessing persons and things. It is also a form of protection. For example Warnier, (1993a: 308) recounts that on one occasion, he saw a woman-potter spat on a pot he bought as a parting ritual before handing the pot to him. The "use of saliva as means of blessing people and things is not peculiar to the Fon" says Warnier, (1993a). Parents, grandparents and other elderly relatives use it to bless a child.

in misfortune through illness, accident, a business loss, or loss of a job, failed bid for promotion, to cite a few. It is under some of such circumstances that migrants relate their failure abroad to curses from back home and thus seek remedies through different means²⁸⁸. For example after repeated failure attempts to get a visa for Canada, the US, and UK for the elder sister of my informant Emelda, her mum accused Emelda's paternal uncles. A man of God²⁸⁹ met her one day during a prayer session and told her that her mother-in-law who died 10 years ago is angry that she has been abandoned. In November 2015, the 'cry-die' for this mother-in-law (Emelda's grandmother) took place. In January 2016, Emelda's sister finally got a student visa for Canada after three failure attempts. At the same time, Emelda got her work permit in the US through her paper marriage. When her work permit was out, Emelda called me on phone and said: "Chris our Lord has done it. Blessings are doubling..." Thus Emelda's family considered the celebration of the death of Emelda's grandmother as the act that broke the assumed bad luck that was causing visa refusals for Emelda's sister.

Another threat countering measure which migrants employ is to ask families in Cameroon to dedicate a church service on their behalf. This is especially the case for migrants who are Catholics. Sometimes, when situations become difficult, migrants will send money to their families to offer mass on their behalf. Within the catholic faith, to offer mass means that a member of a congregation gives the name of a sibling, friend, relative to be read in church, in which the priest asked God for blessings, or guidance and protection, or for thanksgiving depending on what the author stated as a need. This is usually done before the Eucharistic prayer.

From the foregoing, it is evident that witchcraft accusations set in when migrants are having difficulties in their countries of destination and as a result they seek solutions by fulfilling various rites from church services to death rituals, and sending actual cash to those that might have been forgotten. In this sense, to avoid

²⁸⁸ See also Nyamnjoh, (2013).

²⁸⁹ In Cameroon, those who considered themselves as men of God say that they communicate with God and can see things that are physically unseen to unbelievers. These people can be pastors, prophets, apostles.

witchcraft, a migrant has to maintain a balance between personal success and social responsibility vis-à-vis country of origin and country of destination (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 244, 251).

Yet, for some migrants, the best way to be protected from any form of misfortune is to ‘surrender your life to Christ’. Thus besides thanksgiving service in church, some migrants convert to Pentecostal religions. According to van Dijk, (1997, 2002) the changing migration dynamics have made Pentecostalism to become an integral part in the life of migrants, from praying for travel visas to praying for migrants’ success in Europe. Pentecostalism changes the life of the convert, s/he becomes ‘born-again’. In this born-again practices, Meyer, (2004: 94, 103-104) asserts that there are two forces governing the world—God and the devil. The former denotes divine power that comes from the Holy Spirit, the latter symbolises rituals, murderers, killers, and members of the occult. One needs to seek solutions from God to remedy these evil forces. For Lauterbach, (2004), this theme of God and the devil is what have prompted the spread of Pentecostal churches amongst migrant communities in Europe as migrants attempt to seek solutions to their problems.

In the same vein, Sabar, (2010) affirms that faced with evil spirits, religion becomes a weapon used by migrants to conquer ‘forces of darkness’ that tend to obstruct their successes. Emiliene’s story sheds light on this:

Emiliene have been married with her husband for ten years but couldn’t get pregnant. Her husband travelled to Switzerland a year after their marriage. Two years later, Emiliene joined him. Emiliene worked as a waitress in a restaurant in Zurich but she lost her job when the restaurant owner was downsizing. When I spoke with Emiliene, she explained that she had seen in her dream that her husband’s ex-wife was responsible for her inability to conceive as well as the fact that she lost her job. Before leaving Cameroon, she was a member of Eglise Evangelique. Over the years, while in Switzerland, she converted and became a ‘born-again’ Christian and a devoted follower of Prophet T.B Joshua. She usually follows his sermons online on Emmanuel TV²⁹⁰.

²⁹⁰ Prophet T.B. Joshua is a Nigerian prophet and founder of the Synagogue Church of all Nations (SCOAN); a religious denomination that runs Emmanuel

Emiliene sent her photo through a friend that was going to Cameroon so that her mum could take it to Nigeria for Prophet TB Joshua to pray for her. She also sent 1500CHF which included transportation to Nigeria, lodging, feeding for three days, and to purchase the ‘holy water’ that has been blessed by Prophet TB Joshua²⁹¹. A friend that was coming back from vacation brought the ‘holy water’ to Emiliene²⁹². She fasted and drank the ‘holy water’ for a week and two months later, she got pregnant. I paid Emiliene a visit when I heard she was sick and found out that she was pregnant and she told me not to tell anyone about the pregnancy. She even stopped attending parties until she gave birth; for fear of jealousy and risk of losing the baby. But before she gave birth, she enrolled in a training program to work with the elderly, (*aide à domicile*).

Emiliene’s case illustrates that through their doctrine of divine healing and casting out evil spirits, Pentecostal pastors make their services even more relevant and needed by migrants (and non-migrants alike) who are continuously confronted with unbounded demands for remittances and the possibilities of being ‘tied down’ by their families. Sabar, (2010: 113) described this as “a global sense of evil”. This ‘global sense of evil’ best describes the narrative of Emiliene who overlooked the economic factors that might have

TV. This religious organisation is very popular across sub Saharan Africa and members are assured of healing, deliverance, and protection. Information on the website says distance is not a barrier, anyone who believes can be saved, healed, and delivered in Jesus name. More information on Pastor TB Joshua and his ministry can be found at <http://www.scoan.org/>. Members across the globe can send prayer request and follow online healing at <http://emmanuel.tv/> (accessed 02.02.2016)

²⁹¹ Within the Catholic Church, ‘holy water’ is usually used for blessing, to send away evil spirits, or to prevent someone from having an accident, or other forms of misfortune. Parishioners facing spiritual problems usually have ‘holy water’ in their homes. In the Catholic Church, ‘holy water’ is given free of charge, it always available at the church premises for anyone who need it. But the ‘holy water’ from Prophet TB Joshua is for sale. It is said that the latter is more powerful in bringing about breakthrough in all sphere of a person’s life.

²⁹² Emiliene offered to give me a glass of the ‘holy water’. She told me: “this will bring a breakthrough in your life—your finances, your job, your marriage, your studies, I mean total breakthrough”. I thanked her and politely refuse the offer.

affected her job problems but rather believed that her husband's ex-wife was responsible for her problems.

In such situations, the church then becomes both a space for refuge and an ideology of comfort for those migrants seeking protection against evil forces. But what came out clear in the case of Emiliene and many more like her demonstrates that the family is both a site of tension that threatens solidarity and a supportive social network (Warnier, 1993b, Geschiere 1997b). Trapped in this ambiguity of familial support and tension, and given the fact that one can never sever kinship ties as Geschiere, (1997b: 212) noted, migrants' Pentecostalism thus offers ways of containing sorcery.

In sum, what is even more evident is that religious engagements are important aspects that help us to understand how social relations are transformed when people live and relate to more than one setting across borders. Particularly relevant is the fact that converting to Pentecostalism has become more visible as an antidote to threats of jealousy and witchcraft that strain migrants' relations with their families back home.

Conclusion

As I round up this book on Cameroonian transnational migration and remittances, I think about all the stories about bush and bushfalling that I have heard from migrants and my interactions with these migrants and their families from August 2007 when I started working on this subject. These narratives are full of successes but also of challenges interpreted differently by the migrants and their families. I also think about my own never ending desire to fall bush after my bachelor studies, initially to the UK at the University of Bradford where I was admitted for a master degree in Peace and Conflict Studies. I was motivated to apply to this program to broaden my knowledge in Gender and Conflict Studies but mainly, also to fall bush.

My strategy was to get the admission and then apply for scholarship given the high costs of fees for non UK and EU students. Unfortunately, this never worked out. With no scholarship and knowing my family economic background, pursuing a master degree in Peace and Conflict Studies remained illusionary. I would go anyhow. Then I started preparing my application for a master degree in Gender Studies at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. In choosing South Africa, I took into consideration my family income. At least some how they could afford to sponsor me to South Africa even if that meant selling some family property, I thought. I was willing to travel at all cost, but in this journey, I had one goal in mind which was to further my studies to a master degree level. I knew many friends who had travelled to Europe where they worked and studied part-time. None of these friends went through a scholarship. So for me, having a scholarship was nothing but impossible, not after I have tried once and failed. I overlooked it in my bushfalling plans. I just wanted to leave anyhow and ‘huzzle’ and study like many others do. My German boss and colleague tried to convince me that it was better to go through a scholarship rather than to go at any cost (à

tout prix). The way I wanted to go was not realistic²⁹³. “Life in bush is difficult”, she cautioned. She even suggested that I should use whatever money I had for bushfalling to bribe for an entrance into ENAM (the Cameron Advance school of Administration and Magistracy). “I am worried about you falling bush à tout prix”, she noted. Then one day she wrote down a list of scholarship websites, notably nuffic.nl, iss.nl, and suggested that I checked and apply for a scholarship instead of going à tout prix.

I never took this seriously because for me, it was the same as someone telling me to check this or that school. I already had in mind the schools I was interested in. In addition, during the many discussions between me and her concerning falling bush à tout prix and falling bush through scholarship, I didn’t take it seriously because for me such discussions were part of her research, the study on Cameroonian migration we were doing. I had the same dismissive or defiant feeling that people in Cameroon have when they are told that life in Europe is not easy. So her advice on the difficulties of Europe and her fears of what might happen to me if I fall bush à tout prix didn’t quench my high bushfalling aspirations. The only time I actually took time to go online and search for scholarships was when Professor Michaela Pelican who was a colleague to my boss (and was also carrying out her research on a similar subject on bushfalling to the Gulf States) persuaded me to apply for scholarships. While having lunch with her one afternoon in Yaoundé, she thoroughly explained to me that there are many scholarships available and encouraged me to check it out. She asked me what I intended to do and I said I was interested to continue to a master degree in Gender Studies in South Africa. Hearing this, she advised that, apart from Gender Studies, I can also apply for a master in Anthropology since

²⁹³ Alpes, (2011) used the phrase “bushfalling à tout prix” to describe the unending desire for out migration in Cameroon. This phrase was inspired by the Cameroonian movie “Paris à tout prix” by Josephine Ndagnou. The movie is about a young girl Suzy from a working class neighbourhood in Yaoundé. To realize her dream of falling bush to Paris to ease her family’s financial predicaments, she embarks on a dangerous adventure. After several unsuccessful attempts at buying a valid visa, and a failed attempt to cross the maritime border between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, she opted for prostitution and succeeded to finally fall bush only to discover that life in Paris was not the paradise that she thought.

I have a background in Anthropology and Sociology. I had a white notebook which I always walk around with. In my small white notebook, she wrote down the Wenner-Gren scholarship and asked me to check it. "This is a foundation that sponsors anthropological research", she said. Then she turned to my boss and said: "Jill, I think you need to take time off to show her how this is done". After our lunch, my boss suggested for the first time that we should go to the internet together so that she can show me how to check out these scholarships, search for relevant information, and other application details. The process was so fast that I didn't quite understand. Nonetheless, it was after this encounter that the thought of falling bush through scholarship started to take a central space in my mind.

I had seen Cameroonian girls fall bush through marriage, and sometimes through cyber marriage, not through scholarship. A friend of mine who had a cyber café in Buea showed me a Western Union receipt of 50.100FCFA that a boyfriend of hers from the US sent to her. She met this guy online three years ago. She suggested that I signed up for the same website. She even created a profile for me. "Chris, this can work. There are girls who have fallen bush through this way. You go to Douala and you find that many girls have fallen bush through this means", she assured me. Then she joked that "You girls in Buea are slow, Francophone girls are very sharp..." Then she said "since I am here at the cyber café all day, I will be checking your profile for you" and I thanked her for her kindness. Two weeks later my friend from the cyber café checked and told me that no one had written to me. "It is because you don't have any picture on your profile Christy. People don't like to write to those without picture", she said. I told her not to worry, that there were many universities abroad I could easily get admitted to.

Like I said, I have been used to seeing many people fall bush to study and 'huzzle' as well as through marriage migration. All these were some of the reasons that I didn't take seriously, the possibility of falling bush through a scholarship. Rather, the former ways of falling bush were more common. Then one day, a Cameroonian friend of my boss stopped-by for a visit. He was studying in Denmark, and he had a scholarship. So when he left, my boss turned to me and said: "you see, there are also people who fall bush through

scholarship”. This encounter with this Cameroonian student on scholarship in Denmark was the turning point that changed my bush à tout prix agenda. Not too long afterwards, one of my teachers called and informed me that there was a scholarship that had been launched and advertised on our school notice board, I should check it out she suggested. It was the Erasmus Mundus European Union scholarship for talented students from Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific to study at various European universities. “With the good Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3 on a scale of 4 (second class upper division), that you have, I am sure you can get a scholarship”, she noted. That same day after work, I stopped at my university campus and got all the required information. I called two of my friends and informed them and a friend of mine and I applied. This was how I got my scholarship to fall bush to Sweden for a master degree in Development Studies in 2009.

I got a full scholarship yet my family gave me 600.000FCFA as pocket money. Part of this money came from my mum’s njangi, then she borrowed some from one of my very close maternal uncle, and some from a neighbour. I had some savings from my job so I added it to the 600.000 FCFA to make it one million FCFA which I then changed into Euros. Being on full scholarship, I could as well just travelled without any financial assistance from my parents, but I opted to have them contribute because I knew the entire family will benefit from my migration and so I wanted them to at least contribute something. Had it been I was not on scholarship, what would they have done? I asked myself. They would have spent more to send me to bush. So what they gave me as contribution was nothing compared to what they would have spent. These were the thoughts that preoccupied my mind. When I came to Sweden, a month later I sent back almost half of the money my parents had given me. For the entire two years that I was in Sweden, I remitted more than 10 times what my parents gave me: I renovated my parents’ house, paid for school fees for other relatives and some of our neighbours, took care and still take care of my parents especially my mum after she was diagnosed with womb cancer.

Seeing all what I have done and still do, my dad once told me over the phone (and repeated it when I went home in 2011 and 2014)

that I was really trying and he prayed that God should continue to guide and protect me. "...I used to think that your brothers will be the ones doing all what you are doing, but I was mistaken", he said. My dad's statement (which centres on the changing local perceptions of male and female children, especially in relation to migration decisions) and my own enduring desire to fall bush reflect the general picture of the bushfaling landscape in Cameroon. This book has been an effort to commit these narratives into writing and to shed light on the dynamics and norms that shape Cameroonian transnational migration and remittances.

The ethnographic character of my research spread over seven years from the time I started working on this theme of Cameroonian migration has allowed me to pay close attention to the evolution of Cameroonian migration. This focus on, and participation in the practice of transnational migration and remittance-giving from a familial-gender-moral economy perspective have broaden my understanding of the increasing transnational migration trend in Cameroon. It reveals just how central migration has become mainstreamed as the pathway to success amongst Cameroonian youths. In venturing into this path of success, migrants' decisions are guided mainly by the idea that they want to better their lives and that of their families. Indeed in a context where economic opportunities remain a privilege for a few, it is only obvious that these dashed hopes are what make the belief in bushfaling à tout prix even stronger.

As the economic condition of the country changed, so too has migration patterns. I have described how these patterns have changed from a 'been too' type of migration to a bushfaller type of migration. Mr. Moka a retired CDC (Cameroon Development Corporation) top manager explained to me that in 1961 when he was about to travel to London for a six-month training course as part of his work with the CDC, his family, especially his mum, cried. They tried to put pressure on him not to go. He explained that, he was really reluctant, but it was a requirement for the job as demanded by the British. He needed some more training on logistics and supplies before he could assume his post as Supply Manager for the CDC. He explained that the Whiteman's land was a strange land, so he wasn't sure what would happened or what was awaiting him. His mother

especially worried that something bad might happen to him. It was ok for him to travel, but to travel to such a strange land so far, was something that his family worried about. Today, these dynamics have changed; as a matter of fact, families encourage their children to travel abroad to go and ‘look for it’. One of my aunties while shouting at one of my brothers said: “you are very lazy, there are so many ‘lines’ out there, your mates are going out to ‘huzzle’ to better their life. You sit here in Cameroon, earning miserable salaries as a teacher in these kobo-kobo schools (loosely translates as poorly-paid private schools)”. Thus if migration in the days following independence was for education and such achievements were celebrated, families today expect more economic successes than educational achievements. They pull resources together to ensure the successful completion of a migration project. Consequently, they monitor the migrant’s progresses abroad, benefitting through remittances and interfering in the migrant’s life— calling him/her, sending the migrant food, including finding their male migrant a good wife.

Yet this family mobilization and solidarity in relation to migration also breeds tension and conflicts. Eggebo (2010) study demonstrates how remittances from migration is a way to fulfil family moral obligations. Nonetheless migrants are aware that at some point, it might be worth it to prove their allegiance to their family so they keep their money transfer receipts (pg. 36). These receipts, I would argue are like report cards to attest to the fact that migrants achieved the goals in meeting family demands. For the migrant, this means s/he didn’t eat alone the benefits reaped off from a family venture— (migration).

These socio-cultural and economic conjunctures that lead to migration which have been central to this study constitute some of the many uncertainties that characterize daily life in the migrants context of departure—Cameroon. The stories of my informants in relation to their remittance habits are ‘thick’ descriptive accounts, full of emotions and moral values that characterize familial modes of belonging. Yet, rather than just conclude that these migrants’ trajectories and remittance patterns are variable and socio-economically altruistic, my aim has been to examine how gender and familial moral norms as well as other signifiers determine the

migration and remittance patterns of Cameroonian migrants. To do this, I have examined the meanings attached to having a bushfaller within a family and/or what it means to be a bushfaller, and in particular a successful bushfaller. I have also examined the pressures, jealousy, and witchcraft metaphors that characterize migrants-family relations with regards to migration and remittance flows. Through this study, I have complemented the literature on transnational migration by adding a gender and in particular, a moral economy dimension to the family perspectives.

This book is about transnational migration and remittances of Cameroonian migrants. As documented in the preceding chapters, economic factors instigated mainly by the economic crises from the late 80s greatly contributed to massive out migration from Cameroon. For some Cameroonians, their journey starts with migration to other African countries and later followed by migration to the North. Images of Whiteman kontri depicted as heaven (in contrast to hell—Cameroon) transmitted through the media as well as ostentatious bushfallers behaviour have legitimated an even stronger belief in bushfalling. The very usage of terms such as bush, bushfallers, mbeng, mbengis, that relate to transnational migration reveals how migration has become mainstreamed into national discourses as the surest path to success for Cameroonian youths. In this culture of migration, my study demonstrates that different actors take part to make a migration journey possible— individual migrants, family, migration brokers, local associations (tontines), and churches.

The case of Cameroon further reveals that migration is never an individual affair. It is a collective action featuring an individual migrant within his/her network of family and friends. This theme of migration-as-a-family-affair becomes more visible in familial definition of successful and unsuccessful migrants. Thus, the figure of a successful migrant is one who does not betray the family's confidence entrusted in him/her. S/he has to fulfil familial expectations through remittances. Migration thus becomes a means for ensuring family sustenance for all the parties involve. In this sense, the findings of my research may be seen as supporting the NEM theorists (Stark and Bloom, 1985, Stark and Lucas, 1988, Taylor 1999). But it has also broaden the NEM theory by proposing

that with regards to migration, conceptions of the family change and that family is not a homogenous group but is differentiated between what I have called the 'operational' and 'general' family.

This book has also contributed to the social network theory of migration and the feminist theory of intersectionality in relation to migration as was first used by Brooks and Redlin, (2009) Bürker, (2012). With regards to the network theory of migration, it is evident from my study that networks of friendship and kinship ties facilitate migration even through sharing information for available 'lines' as friends do or raising money to pay for the migration of their sibling as families do. In understanding the significance of the family in transnational migration, the results of this study reveal that the family unit strongly influences decisions as to who migrates. In the decision making, the person who is 'smart' and 'sharp' and 'family-oriented' is chosen. This is because migration is considered a pathway to success not only for the individual migrant but also for his/her family. Nonetheless these obligations to meet family demands through remittances is not void of conflicts, thus prompting migrants to renegotiate social and kinship relations in a very strategic way so as not to endanger ties.

In relation to intersectionality, my study proved that migrants' trajectories are differentiated based on key variables such as gender, socio-economic class status, ethnicity and sexuality. The intersectional approach of my study is in line with Brooks and Redlin, (2009) Bürker, (2012) and Sinatti, (2014) who assert that class, gender, and ethnicity affect migration and migration outcomes. This book demonstrated the importance of how gendered norms that regulate male and female behaviour in relation to migration and remittances determine migrants' spousal choice. It also shows how mobility is influenced by the history of the different Cameroonian ethnic groups. For Grassfielders, migration has always been a form of economic way to insure sustenance. Grassfielders physical mobility has always been associated to their social and economic mobility starting from the colonial times where they migrated to the coast to work in the plantations. With national economic constraints, this pattern of mobility-for-economic sustenance has become widespread not only for the Grassfielders but Cameroonians in

general especially those from the lower class. That is, those from families with low financial resources and no access to connections in high places for jobs and opportunities.

In Cameroon, migration of a family member and subsequent family members is considered as a way to 'lighten the load'. One of my informants captures this clearly when she says: "when you are here alone, the load is too heavy; you have to carry it all on your own. But if you struggle and bring over one or two of your siblings, then you will see that the load will be lighten. You won't be the only one families will look up to, you will be two or three and in that way the family socio-economic condition will be more secured". My study provides evidence to show that the inflows of material resources to family and friends at home is inextricably accompanied by improved living condition and consumption patterns, health, education, housing, and general better living conditions. This improvement in living conditions in turn represents a long term economic impact nationally. In this respect, the argument raised by this study is that understanding the social impact and value of remittances requires us to go beyond an econometric-quantifiable model to analyse the meaning of remittances to families and communities in migrants' sending contexts. This is because remittances embody obligations and loyalty between migrants and their families and become an integral part of familial social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Migrants and their families need to maintain ties and to do this, they must maintain a moral juridical character by ensuring that families back home and the migrants abroad are "not forgotten". This means that, communication through phone calls and sending remittances remain central to maintaining ties across great geographical distances.

My work made special contribution by complementing the existing literature on moral economy and migration with perspectives on the gendered and family centred patterns of these migrants' transfers. Existing studies on moral economy within the field of migration concentrated on finding a moral turn to nation-states immigration policies (Heyman 1998, Fassin 2005, 2009)²⁹⁴. The gendered and family centred dynamics of this migration and

²⁹⁴ See Stevanovic, (2012) on moral economy and Bangladeshi migrants' remittances.

remittance morality has hitherto not been researched. Likewise, this anthropological, gendered pluri-local methodology that takes into consideration the perspectives of the migrants in their countries of resident and their families in the countries of departure is rather new. What my study has shown is that the act of remitting is guided by moral principles that involve claims and duties from both the migrants' families and migrants respectively. In this line of thought, it is worth mentioning that the act of sending home remittances are moulded by notions of kinship belonging.

In line with Gallo, (2013: 38), remittances are directed beyond the nuclear family and this have repercussion on extended family ties beyond consanguinity and affinity to include members of the community in which the migrants lived prior to their departure. Thus the remittance flows of Cameroonian migrants are not guided by self-interest as indicated in some remittance scholarship e.g. Stark and Lucas, 1988, Glytsos 1988 and 1997, Hoddinott, 1994, de la Briere et al, 2002, Hagen-Zanker and Siegel 2007 who maintain that migrants remittances to their parents is driven by the aspiration to inherit, arguing that remittances decrease over time as the migrant's attachment to his/her family gradually weakens, and positing that the intention to return home permanently inspires the migrant to remit and this differs for those with no return intention. Rather, I argue that migrants will still remit even without any intention to inherit, or to return home permanently. Moreover, migrants can never fully detach from their families. They can be tactical in reducing their communicative networks such as changing phone numbers and/or reducing the number of people for whom they give out their telephone numbers but they can never sever family ties. With these arguments, I make the case that in order to evaluate the economic impacts of remittances, we must first understand the moral relevance and significance of remittances for family and kinship relations. My data reveal that the sending of remittances is guided by moral norms about rights, responsibilities, and appropriate behaviour towards friends and families.

The importance of the cultural and emotional value found in family ties is difficult to capture when using conventional economic analyses. Through the moral economy framework, my research has

been able to expand on this mainstream economic literature by showing that we must acknowledge the norms, values, and obligations that are common to both remitters and receivers and the symbolic significance they attach to transnational social ties. This approach allows for a better understanding of the motivations behind remitting, the variations in remittance behaviour, and the persistence of these flows under variable conditions. Conceptualising migration and remittances through this framework highlighted the various dynamics and the meanings the remittance practice holds for the Cameroonian migrants and their families I studied.

In the course of this study, I have come to recognize how migration and remittances affect marriage and marriage practices (and vice versa) in both the contexts of departure and destinations. In line with Fleischer, (2011) my investigations have shown that on the one hand migrants remittances and marriage practices are shaped by social, economic, and especially cultural elements that define community and familial relations. On the other hand, structural forces such as legality as defined by nation states policies impacts on migrants' marriage practices, notably in choosing spouses. In this regard, my study contributes to the literature on migration-marriage-and remittances in that I have shown that migrants' status (documented or undocumented) affect their spousal choices and this has implication on the number of persons a migrant has to remit to. As a matter of fact, legal residency sometimes precedes love in the making of decisions regarding who migrants chose to marry, as an informant noted, "we don't eat love, papers are more important".

As my data demonstrates, migrants send remittances to cover family needs as well as needs of friends. Some of these needs include investment projects to generate income for the benefit of the recipient friend or family. This creates a positive image of the migrant as 'good' and successful. On the other hand, where the migrant fails to meet unbounded remittance expectations, s/he is branded as being wicked and/or unsuccessful. It is important to mention that being undocumented can restrict the timing and the amount of remittances sent by some migrants. Yet in making decisions to migrate, families do not think about the legal and/or living conditions of the migrant upon arrival. At the end of the day, "bush is bush and it is better than

Cameroon”. What is important is that migrants have to come home with adequate earnings from their ‘bush hunting’ to feed the family. Hence the notion that deportation will stop or better still discourage African transnational migration remains unconvincing.

I find that an understanding of the socio-economic significance of remittances cannot be disentangled from the analysis of the moral evaluation and the meaning of money and other material goods. This brings out the double effect of remittances which serve an immediate need of family sustenance (family wellbeing) and a long term need of increase Gross National Income— migration and development model. Hence this double effect of remittances transform the way family life is configured across different social strata. As a matter of fact, ideas of what a family is and the changing definition of kin relations with regards to migration is informative of how migrants construct their genealogies and the values ascribed to investing in migration and benefitting through remittances.

To sum up this conclusion, I return to the remark made by a Cameroonian youth as quoted in the introductory chapter: “the country has become hard/difficult so everyone wants to go abroad”. This statement illustrates the migration climate in Cameroon; an insistence that migration is the only way out. Migration guarantees family sustenance and long term economic security as one of my informant/friend reminded me during dinner while I was rounding up the first manuscript of this book:

Leo: “so you are really serious about this your decision of going back to Cameroon”?

Christy: “yes, why”?

Leo: “honestly I don’t think this is the right time for you to do that. Before you go to Cameroon, you have to make sure that you bring over at least one or two of your siblings. They will serve as your security when things go bad in Cameroon. If you want to say you are going back to Cameroon, you should make sure you have legalized your situation here, which means you can go in and out at any time. You should have investments in Cameroon, and most importantly, you should have your siblings here whom you can count on when the going gets tough. Returning to Cameroon just like that is like a

‘buyam-sellam’²⁹⁵ who goes to the market to sell and after a successful sale, she took all her money to try a new line of business without reserving any capital aside. S/he is hoping that with her experience, she will succeed in this new business, then it turned out things get blocked and she remains frustrated with no capital to start again. Think about your security Christina, think about Cameroon’s ‘wahala’ (pidgin slang for problems/difficulties). You should have siblings here so that when those heavy problems from Cameroon knock on your door, they can always intervene to support you. Or you should go back when you have saved enough and have various investments back home... Without these, your going back to Cameroon is like someone who is living in paradise and decides to go to the wilderness to build his own paradise only to realize that in the latter, it only gets worse and s/he cannot come back to paradise because the gates would be close...”

Christy: “...anyhow I will survive. We will see. But I can’t stay here afterwards because my student permit will be expired... I will buy a car and sent home to be used as taxi...”²⁹⁶

By using the example of a ‘buyam-sellam’ and the metaphor of paradise and wilderness, Leo’s advice to me reflect the general uncertainties that characterize life for many in Cameroon, not even for those who have studied abroad, for the glorious days of the highly educated returnees are over²⁹⁷. The thought of returning to

²⁹⁵ ‘Buyam-sellam’ is Pidgin English slang for people engaged in small provision businesses (petty trade).

²⁹⁶ My discussion with Leo was quite lengthy and he dismissed all the reasons I gave for wanting to go back including the fact that I would not be able to stay without the legal papers. And he suggested that I buy one through a paper marriage. He offered that he will look for the person, and continue to explain why it is important that I stay for at least five more years before going back.

²⁹⁷ A few days ago I was discussing with one of my brothers and he wanted to know what my plans are after my studies. I told him I would probably be coming back to Cameroon. All along, I have avoided telling them because I know their response will be similar to what my friend Leo told me. My brother was shocked, and then he exclaimed, “What! Coming back? To do what in Cameroon? People are here fighting to go and you want to come back? Please don’t say that. It is better you stay there and struggle than to come back. Or look for visa to go to another country, may be to America or Canada. There is no life here in Cameroon; this country is a mess...”

Cameroon should be for retirees, or for those who in the sense of de Haas (2007c) have fulfilled all the initial plans for migration—enough income, land and infrastructural investments, to cite a few. And even if this is the case, the migrant should ensure that s/he continues to meet up his/her moral obligations when the need arises.

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The Cameroon Civil Status Registration Ordinance of 1981

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights

Appendix

Appendix 1: Sequence of migration flows

Internal migration

- 1950s: labour-driven migration to work in the coastal plantation's after the establishment of the CDC in 1946. This migration was male-only.
- 1954 and 1957: the establishment of the Tole Tea and Ndu Tea Plantations. These tea plantations instigated autonomous migration for women whose labour was needed for tea plucking. Tea plucking is considered a women's task because it is said that women have nimble fingers which are best suited for tea plucking.
- 1980s: rural urban migration. During this time, migration flows were mainly to other urban centers in Cameroon. Young people from the villages migrated to urban centers for education but mainly also in search of economic opportunities. During this time, these young migrants were mostly young men.
- 1990s: Increasing rural-urban migration of both young men and women.

Transnational migration

- 1950s-1960s: Migration for further studies mostly to the UK and US for Anglophones and France for Francophones. These migrants returned home after studies and they occupied top executive and administrative positions created by the departure of the colonial masters. These migrants were called the 'been-tos' (those who have *been to* the Whiteman's land).
- 1980s: migration for economic opportunities but mainly for further studies. Upon completion of their studies, some of these migrants returned home permanently while others only came for visits. These migrants were called "American Wandas".
- 1990s onwards: migration mainly for economic opportunities. These migrants travelled abroad to "huzzle" (meaning to hustle). By the late 1990s-2000, the term "bushfalling" was used in Anglophone Cameroon to describe this migratory pattern. These migrants are called "bushfallers"

Appendix 2: Statistics of Cameroonian migrants in Switzerland



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Département fédéral de justice et police DFJP
Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM
Domaine de direction Coopération Internationale
Division Retour

P.P. CH-3003 Berne-Wabern, SEM

Par Télécopie

Ambassade de la République du Cameroun
SE Monsieur l'Ambassadeur H.L. Bindzi
Brunnaderrain 29
3006 Berne

N° Référence: COO.2180.101.7.548793 / 241.1/Kamerun/2010/03385
Votre référence :
Notre référence : sem-ohi
3003 Berne-Wabern, le 06 février 2016

Chiffres sur la population résidente permanente camerounaise en Suisse

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

Nous nous référons à votre demande récente concernant les chiffres actuels de la population camerounaise résidente en Suisse. Veuillez trouver ci-dessous les chiffres exacts datant du 31 décembre 2015:

	Type de permis	Nombre total	hommes	femmes
permis de courte durée	Permis L	10	7	3
Permis de séjour	Permis B	2038	829	1207
Permis de résidence	Permis C	2124	785	1339

Nous restons à votre disposition pour tout renseignement complémentaire et vous prions d'agréer, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'assurance de notre haute considération

Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM



André Kunzi
Chef

Section Afrique australe, Afrique centrale, Nigeria

Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM
Stefan Dähler
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Appendix 3: Statistics of remittances flow to Cameroon between 1996-2006

Envois des fonds des travailleurs a l'exterieur (reçus par le Cameroun) en millions de FCFA							
Année	montant						
1996	4,510.70						
1997	5,108.40						
1998	6,441.30						
1999	5,079.80						
2000	8,434.90						
2001	4,976.10						
2002	9,861.80						
2003	35 196,00						
2004	51 976,00						
2005	35 408,00						
2006	61 517,00						
source : Ministère des Finances /Direction des Affaires Economiques/Division de la Balance des Paiements, 2007.							

Appendix 4: Money&Com remittance sender's receipt

Money[®]
& Com

Tel. +41 (0)228799793

Fax. +41 (0)228799803

(Copie Client)

Money & Com Rive / Eaux-Vives

Place des Eaux-Vives 12

SUISSE - 1207 Genève

Tel. 022 786 26 28

Fax. 022 786 26 30

Information de l'Expéditeur				Reçu	
Expéditeur		Carte de Fidélité	Pays de Nationalité	Date	MCO3095212
CHRISTINA ATEKMANGO		37700053	CAMEROUN	10.11.2014 10:36:49	
Pays	Ville	Adresse		Numéro de Séquence	
SUISSE	GENÈVE	RUE DE LA SERVETTE		87495	
Date de Naissance	Téléphone	Type d'identification	Numéro d'identification	Caisier	
28.11.1983	0767126774	PASSEPORT	01810082	Patricia Osejo	
Information du Bénéficiaire				Argent à Recevoir	
Bénéficiaire		Téléphone	Numéro d'identification	FCFA 109359.00	
CHRISTOPHER SUH CHE		0023775592543	108225376	Argent à Envoyer	
Pays	Ville	Adresse		Sfr 189.00	
CAMEROUN	DOUALA	DOUALA		Taux de Change	
Correspondant	Rendant	Service	Monnaie de Destination	531	
EXPRESS UNION		GIROS	CENTRAL AFRICAN CFA FRAN	Frais	
Payment Office	Adresse			Sfr. .00	
DOUALA - AKWA 1	Face Central Voyages / Opposite Central Voyages II			Autres	
Forme de Paiement	Compte	Banque		Sfr. .00	
ORCINA				Autres Add.	
Je déclare que je suis l'unique ayant droit économique des valeurs patrimoniales et qu'elles ne proviennent pas d'une activité illicite !			Oui	Total	
Origine des fonds	Travail	Liens de parenté	Sœur, Frère	Sfr. 189.00	

Par ma signature, je confirme avoir lu les conditions générales de Money & Com SA et que les informations ci-dessus sont exactes.

Je déclare que je suis l'unique ayant droit économique des valeurs patrimoniales et qu'elles ne proviennent pas d'une activité illicite.

Toute fausse déclaration est passible de peines allant jusqu'à 5 ans de réclusion, selon l'art. 251 du Code Pénal Suisse.

Signature du Client

Autorisé (Patricia Osejo)PO

Le reçu n'est pas valable sans signature autorisée et sans numéro de transaction valable

NOTE INTERNE: NE PAS DIVULGER DES INFORMATIONS PERSONNELLES NON PUBLIQUES SUR NOS CLIENTS OU ANCIENS CLIENTS, EXCEPTÉ CE QUI EST PERMIS PAR LA LOI.

Money & Com S.A.
Place des Eaux-Vives 12
1207 GENEVE
Tél. 022 786 26 28

Appendix 5: Newspaper article on remittances flow from Switzerland in 2013.

Des migrants toujours plus généreux avec leurs pays

STATISTIQUES. Les transferts de fonds vers les pays en voie de développement ont presque doublé en dix ans.

En 2013, les travailleurs étrangers en Suisse ont envoyé à titre privé au moins 6,5 milliards de francs dans leurs pays d'origine. Ce montant est plus de deux fois plus élevé que l'aide publique au développement accordée par la Suisse dans le monde.

Ces fonds envoyés par les migrants constituent une source importante de revenus pour les pays les plus pauvres. Entre 2003 et 2013, les transferts envoyés depuis la Suisse ont presque doublé, selon l'Office fédéral de la statistique (OFS), qui se base sur les don-



Pas sans risques

Les fonds servent avant tout à couvrir les besoins fondamentaux et à améliorer la vie quotidienne. Mais l'indicateur ne saisit pas leur éventuel impact négatif. L'OFS ne cache pas que ces transferts peuvent par exemple favoriser l'attentisme des autorités face à des réformes économiques et sociales. Ces sources d'argent peuvent également accroître les inégalités et augmenter l'attrait pour une migration vers les pays industrialisés.

Western Union sont pris en compte. Les experts estiment toutefois qu'une grande partie des flux financiers passent en dehors de ces voies. Les verse-

ments effectifs dépasseraient de moitié ceux enregistrés officiellement.

Et ces transferts n'ont pas augmenté qu'en Suisse. De 2004 à 2014, à l'échelle globale, ils sont passés de 230 milliards de dollars à 582 milliards, selon les estimations de la Banque mondiale. Rien que cette année, la croissance est de 5%. En 2014, trois quarts de l'argent est allé dans des pays en développement. C'est trois fois plus que l'aide officielle. Ces paiements dépassent aussi nettement les investissements étrangers directs dans ces pays (Chine exceptée). La plus grosse somme (71 milliards de dollars) va en Inde. Viennent ensuite la Chine (64 milliards) et les Philippines (28 milliards). -ars

Près de 6,5 milliards de francs ont été envoyés depuis la Suisse.

nées de la Banque mondiale. Seuls les paiements par des canaux officiels comme les banques, la poste ou des prestataires de transferts comme

Source: 20minutes newspaper (20minutes.ch), published on October 30th 2014, pg.8.

Appendix 6: Interview guide, pilot study Sweden (June-September 2013)

A) Demographic and family characteristics

1. Name, sex, marital status,
2. How many children do you have (if any)
3. How many brothers and sisters do you have (if any). Where are they? What are they doing (profession)
4. Level of education [primary, post primary, secondary, high school, university—bachelors, masters, PhD]

5. Age

- a. 15-20
- b. 21-25
- c. 26-30
- d. 31-35
- e. 36-40
- f. 41-45
- g. 46-50
- h. 51-60
- i. 61+

6. Employment status

7. Ethnicity/ tribe

8. Religion

B) Migratory trajectory

9 Years spent in Sweden

10 How did you come to Sweden

11 Who paid for the travel

12 Whose decision was it for you to travel

13 Whom did you tell and whom did you not tell about your departure and why?

14 What does it mean to be a bushfaller

15 What do you think of yourself as a bush faller here in Sweden

16 What are some of the family expectations on you being a Cameroonian migrant /bushfaller here in Sweden?

C) Migrants communication with, and remittances flow to families

15 How often do you call your family

16 To whom do you give your phone numbers to and why? Who do you call? Who calls you? What strategies do you put in place not give out your phone numbers

17 How often do you send remittances back home and what motivates you to remit

18 In what circumstances do you send back remittances and to whom and why this choice of person

19 Have there been any changes with regards to your remittance pattern since you came to Sweden? If so how? What can you say accounted for these changes

20 What are some of the things you sent back home to your family

21 Could you please tell me what you think about sending home remittances?

22 Does your family also send you some things? Or do they help you in any way? How do they help you? Through what circumstances?

23 What do you think about this help from your family

Appendix 7: Interview guide, research in Switzerland and Sweden (January-November 2014)

I) Migrants demographic characteristics

1. Name, sex, marital status,
2. How many children do you have (if any)
3. How many brothers and sisters do you have (if any). Where are they? What are they doing (profession)
4. Level of education [primary, post primary, secondary, high school, university—bachelors, masters, PhD]
5. Age
 - j. 15-20
 - k. 21-25
 - l. 26-30
 - m. 31-35
 - n. 36-40
 - o. 41-45
 - p. 46-50
 - q. 51-60
 - r. 61+
6. Employment status
7. Ethnicity/ tribe
8. Religion
9. Parents occupation

II) Migratory trajectory, family genealogies, and remittances flow

A) Migratory trajectory and family genealogies

10. Years spent in Sweden/Switzerland?
11. How did you come to Sweden/Switzerland?
12. Who paid for the travel?
13. Whose decision was it for you to travel?

14. Could you please explain to me how this decision for you to migrate was taken? And who were those involve?
15. What were the circumstances that led to your migration?
16. How was the money raised?
17. Whom do you consider your family and why?
18. Whom did you tell and whom did you not tell about your departure and why?
19. What does it mean to be a bushfaller? Will you consider yourself a bushfaller? can you please explain to me why you think you are bushfaller or why you think you are not a bushfaller?
20. What do you think of yourself as a bush faller here in Sweden/Switzerland
21. What are some of the family expectations on you being a Cameroonian migrant /bushfaller here in Sweden?

B) Migrants-family communication and remittance flows

22. How often do you call your family? Whom do you call the most and why
23. Does your family also call you? How often do they call you? To whom do you give out your telephone numbers and why?
24. How often do you send remittances back home and what motivates you to remit?
25. To whom do you remit and why?
26. In what circumstances do you send back remittances and to whom and why this choice of person?
27. When was the last time you sent home remittances? Any estimates of how much you can send per year?
28. What is the representativity of the remittances you send to the needs back in Cameroon? In other words, in what ways are the remittances you send meeting family needs?
29. What do people ask the most?
30. Who are those who benefit from the remittances you send and in what ways?
31. Have there been any changes with regards to your remittance pattern since you came to Sweden/Switzerland? If so how? What can you say accounted for these changes?
32. What are some of the things you sent back home to your family?

33. Could you please tell me what you think about sending home remittances?

34. Does your family also remit to you? What do they send? How often? Under what circumstances?

35. Can you please explain to me what you think about your family remittances to you?

36. What is the significance of these remittances that your family send to you? In other words what do these remittances that they send mean to you?

Appendix 8: Interview guide for migrants families in Cameroon (December 2014-March 2015)

- In your opinion what is bushfalling?
- What does it mean to you to have a child, sibling, relative, or friend abroad?
- Does s/he send home remittances? If yes, for what purposes and how do you use the money that is sent?
- Who mostly receive the remittances that is sent? Are there any disagreements in relation to this? Who decides how the money is to be used?
- Do you also send him/remittances? if yes, what do you send? For what purposes?
- Can you please tell me a bit more about this your son, daughter, relative, friend abroad?

Appendix 9: List of bride wealth payment

Christina Ateb bride #		
31 Jan 2015 Wine	2000	
2 Feb. return.	2000	
		22000 fcs
Small mimbo cash	125000	125000 fcs
White mimbo 2 1/2 jugs - 7500		500 fcs
Beer 4 crates 24000		24000 fcs
2 Whisky 2 10000		10000 fcs
Some wine		10000 fcs
		<u>191500</u>
A good bunch of plantains.		
Big mimbo cash	250000	250000
White mimbo - cash or 3 jugs		7500
Beer 6 crates 36000		36000
6 good wine		10000
		<u>303500</u>
Small oil 1 1/2 tins or 30 litres 21000		
A good bunch of plantains 8000		8000
- 1 Jug mimbo 3500		3500
2 Crates of beer 12000		12000
		<u>44500</u>
Big oil 3 tins of red oil 32000		
A very good bunch of plantains 10000		10000
2 Jug of white mimbo 7000		7000
3 crates of beer 18000		18000
Some 4 kilograms of meal 11000		11000
Enough wine and one whisky - 14000		14000
		<u>92000</u>
Marriage Soup		
1 good pig cooked 100000		100000
Soup Cover 10000		10000
		<u>110000</u>
P.T.O		

plantains 2 good bunches.	12.000	12.000
6 crates of beer.	36.000	36.000
2 Jugs of White mimbo.	7500	7500
		<u>765500</u>

Marriage.

Lighting.	-	10.000
Chair.		20.000
payment of baskets.		40.000
Beer/wine.		<u>80.000</u>
		150.000

Grand Total = 948500 hs

Appendix 10: Flyer of a formal migration agency

COMINADA

COMMISSION N°: MIN/JUSTICE/CAN/150/08/AVR/2003/125

International Organisation for Certification



File n°



Main Branch

Make Canada your home...

COMINADA, make your home in CANADA, one of the best countries in the world. CANADA offers a quality of life unlike any other country. With the knowledge, competence and experience you have acquired, you can be able to make CANADA your permanent home. Qualified workers, students, immigrants, visitors, investors, businessmen, qualified technicians, refugees ...

STUDENT VISA

Minimum level of education: Advanced Level
 Autumn session : SEPTEMBER
 File deposite : Before June 30th
 Winter session : JANUARY
 File deposite : Before October 31st
 Bank Account : Royal Bank of Canada
 Obtain C.A.Q (Certificate of Acceptation of Quebec)
 Online application by **COMINADA**
 Caution : 22 000 - 30 000 \$
 Distant learning (NEW!!!)
 Travel insurance / lodging facility
 Scholarships available
 Less expensive universities available



IMMIGRANT VISA (base on study of documents)

Official selection : Qualified workers 2-3 times a year
 Venue : Yaounde-Cameroun
 Minimum level required : Ordinary level, CAP, Professional Training
 Age limit : 18 years
 Professional experience : Internship, Salaried, Voluntary service
 Six (06) months minimum
 A good mastery of English or French
 Must have an authentic certificate of non conviction
 Must be in good health and in possession of credible documents
 Duration : 2 years minimum



VISITOR'S VISA

Present an Invitation letter
 Appointment days - Hours : 08h-11h30
 Temporal resident visa : 03 months
 Multiple entry : 12 months
 Deadline of delivery : 15 working days
 Request presented : 03 weeks before the expected date of travel
 Venue: Yaounde - Cameroun
 Travel insurance



REGISTRATION

☐ 5,000 FCFA ☒ 10,000 FCFA (Valid for 60 days)
 Monday-Friday : 8 a.m - 5 p.m
 Saturday : 8 a.m - 12 noon

REFUGEE'S VISA

Present a recommendation from the high Commission of the United Nations for Refugees (Yaounde-Cameroun)
 Present a valid travel ticket
 Present a motivation letter of your situation

DOCUMENTS

IFile A4; 2 Enveloppes A4, Passport, NIC
 Birth certificate, 4 Passport size photographs, CV
 (Certificates, Transcripts, Report cards)
 NB : Make 3 copies each.

Thanks for your trust - E-mail: cominada@live.fr

YAOUNDE - BEAC Street, Elig-Essono
 Main Branch : P.O box 693 Yaounde-Cameroun
 (237) 694 46 06 05 / 877 71 78 84
 243 04 50 30

DOUALA
 Hotel BETE - Akwa Douala-bar
 (237) 699 29 52 17 / 675 78 25 00
 243 18 19 80

BAFOUSSAM
 Main entrance from Yaounde near UCB
 (237) 698 12 12 14 / 243 55 12 12
WITH COMINADA, IT'S SURE...

COMINADA flyer (01/2015)

Appendix 11: Photos during a traditional wedding



1. My paternal uncle rubbed my feet and hand
2. My paternal aunt rubbing my back with palm oil





4. My paternal uncle unwrapping a present for me, 4. Drinking from my paternal uncle's cup next to him is my dad

Appendix 12: Pic 5: undocumented migrants crossing the Mediterranean



(The Economist, July 2014)

Pic 6: photo showing a broker’s flyer pasted on an electricity pole in Bamenda (01/2015)



This book is about transnational migration (familiarily called “bushfalling”) and remittance flows to Cameroon. With the current dire economic state, Cameroonians increasingly aspire to go abroad to make a living. Migrants achieve this through a collective (family) strategy and with the help of migration brokers. Relations between migrants and the family that stays in Cameroon can be characterized as follows: Families raise and educate their children to become adults. In return to giving their children the “gift of life”, families expect reciprocity, best secured through economic success abroad and the sending of remittances by migrants. As families in Cameroon heavily contribute to the funding of migration trajectories, often by selling properties such as land or houses or borrowing money, they also expect a return on their investments. All that constitutes this study explores under the notion of the moral economy of transnational remittances. In this study, remittances are understood to be a composite of financial, material, and cultural flows—maintaining and transforming social and kinship ties. The book proposes also a large exploration of themes in relation to transnational migration: why and how Cameroonians migrate (the role of the operational family in terms of decision and funding; the role of migration brokers through the identification of “lines” and the provision of the necessary papers); the moral justification for migration; the ways social relations and customs are changed by status gained through migration; the ways people explain the failure of migration projects, the difficulties to stay abroad; the matrimonial strategies to go and stay abroad. This is an empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated study that takes thinking on transnational migration informed by African strategies and experiences a step further.

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